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SMALLER POWERS AND BIG BELLIGERENTS

WITH the first daylight raids on Berlin and General Dittmar's admission that the new Russian offensive in the Ukraine seeks to destroy Germany's Southern Army Group, the German citizen must feel that this has been the blackest week of the war. In the face of this grim military prospect Dr. Goebbels can do little except search for signs of disunity between the Allied Nations and acclaim certain German political successes in dealing with the smaller Powers. He can point to the failure of negotiations between Poland and Russia which must mean that, as the Red Armies penetrate Poland, the Soviet Union will have to find allies within the country, since they cannot come to terms with the official Polish Government. He can also exaggerate the significance of the attacks now being made by some American papers on the Allied conduct of the war in the Pacific. Here the kernel of the difficulty lies in General Stilwell's reported insistence that the way to win the war in the Far East is not to worry about former British protectorates in South-Eastern Asia, but to send aid as swiftly as possible to China, where a dangerous political and economic situation is arising. The inflation in China is one of the worst in history; aeroplanes carry tons of bank notes to Chungking, while the country cries out for the most urgent medical and other necessities.

In Europe Goebbels claims two successes for German diplomacy. The Finns are still trying to bargain with the Russians; the position of General Dietl's army, the problem of food supplies and the pressure of Berlin together account for Finland's dangerous disinclination to accept what everyone outside Finland admits to be generous terms. While Finland hesitates to get out of the war, Turkey has made it almost rudely clear that she maintains the odd position of a neutral Ally. In fact, the reasons for the breakdown of our staff conversations with Turkey are intelligible enough. Turkey only intended to come into the war (if at all) when Allied victory was "in the bag"; the example of Mussolini's miscalculation in 1940 may have been taken as a warning against a premature assumption that the war is nearly over. Neutrality on the other hand has suited Turkey well. By a process of skilful bargaining the Turks have managed to extract from both sides an agreeable quantity of guns, tanks and aeroplanes. What post-war reward could Turkey look for at Anglo-American hands for using them against Bulgaria at the risk of probably some retaliation by the *Luftwaffe* against Istambul? The answer to this question, considering Allied commitments to Greece, has never been obvious; and the Turkish press is now saying so with some asperity.

Moreover, if we read aright the mind of Ankara, the Turkish Government fears some hard bargaining among the Allies in the Balkans and Middle East at the end of the war, and probably argues that entry into the war would put her into an awkward position if Moscow and the Western Powers did not see eye to eye. All this is easy to understand. It seems odd, however, that the Turks should say that they object to being treated as Indian or colonial cannon fodder. In fact, the usual view of Colonel Blimp has hitherto been that the Turk is a gentleman.

Greeks and Yugoslavs

The agreement reached between the two Greek partisan armies is welcome news. Now, perhaps, the E.L.A.S. forces will receive supplies again and be free to turn their attention to fighting the Nazis without fear of an attack in the rear from E.D.E.S. Here, as in Yugoslavia, the constitutional issue is one of the main causes of the crisis between the Liberation Movement and the emigration. King George is keeping very quiet for the moment, but he appears to be at least as resolute a stickler for royal rights as King Peter. The latter is now in a difficult position. With virtual recognition of Marshal Tito by the Allies, the "neutral, non-partisan" Cabinet of Mr. Puritch has ceased to count for all practical purposes. It may soon lose even its diplomatic value to the King if it is true that Dr. Smodlaka, Foreign Commissioner in Tito's Provisional Government, has arrived in Allied territory. Mr. Churchill, apparently, intends to hold fast to the person—and the doubtful prestige—of the King while at the same time sending his friends and relatives to aid and pay court to Marshal Tito. But it will be difficult for even such an acrobatic strategist as the Prime Minister to keep his feet in two camps at the same time. He may hope to achieve this difficult task by persuading King Peter to drop his entourage of reactionary Serb politicians in favour of a suite of Serb officers. The King would still represent nobody in Yugoslavia, but he would remain, for Mr. Churchill's purposes, royal and legitimate.

The New Argentine Regime

The Argentine break with the Axis at the end of January was a hollow and short-lived triumph for Allied diplomacy. General Ramirez, who was the figurehead of the revolt last June by the pro-Axis group of officers, has now himself been overthrown and replaced by General Farrell, the Vice-President. Whilst the immediate cause of this new putsch was the nominally anti-Axis stand to which Ramirez had been driven by Allied pressure, there can be no doubt that it reflects a much deeper domestic and diplomatic crisis in Argentina. The Fascist policies of Ramirez are continued, and even intensified, under the new regime; real power has passed to Juan Peron, leader of the notorious Colonels' League, for whom General Farrell is merely a mouthpiece. By replacing Ramirez by Farrell, Peron hoped to trick the Allies into believing that the new Government was still entitled to the recognition that they so unwisely bestowed on Ramirez. Luckily, they have shown no intention of being so deceived. Our representatives in Argentina have been instructed to refrain from any official action which might be construed as even *de facto* recognition. Moreover, Mr. Stettinius has set out some five conditions which must be fulfilled before the suspended relations can be resumed. From these it is clear that the Farrell regime is still tolerating and even conniving at continued Axis espionage and the use of Argentina as a base for Fascist intrigue in the Latin Americas; and that its foreign policy is directed to the disruption of "hemisphere solidarity." It is not enough, however, for the democracies to demand token adherence to their cause from Argentina; that alone will not ease

the explosive situation which is now developing throughout South America. Unless they can accompany that demand with a promise of support for the democratic parties, now compelled to work underground, the Argentine generals will consolidate their position.

Decision in the Ukraine?

Launched in conditions of thaw and slush which would have daunted a less confident commander, Marshal Zhukov's great new offensive against the left wing of the Southern Group of German armies looks like achieving results of real strategic significance. Already a broad wedge has been driven across the Lvov-Odessa trunk railway between Tarnopol and Proskurov, and the 4th Panzer Army, compelled to withdraw in the general direction of Lvov and the headwaters of the Dniester, must be hard put to it to maintain contact with the rest of the Army Group. To avoid a wide-open breach in the line, the 1st Panzer Army, or the right of the 4th, appears to be falling back rapidly; but this manœuvre means abandoning more and more of the Lvov-Odessa railway. The position of the German armies farther east, within the Dnieper Bend, is becoming increasingly untenable; and though movements may be slow until the ground dries, a major German retreat —to the Dniester, if not to the Pruth—seems inevitable in the near future. With the main supply route from Poland cut, von Manstein has now to cope with the problem of maintaining nearly a million men in the Southern Ukraine and the Crimea by means of three, indifferent, single-track railways crossing Bessarabia, *plus* the limited sea-transport still available between Constanza and Odessa. He will doubtless conduct a fighting retreat, but his resistance is bound to be limited by the supply factor.

The Control of Monopoly

Mr. Morrison, after a longish silence, returned last week-end to his exposition of a post-war policy in the economic field. He was in effect replying to Mr. Oliver Lyttelton, who earlier in the week had told the Conservatives that "there are really very few monopolies in this country." Mr. Morrison, on the other hand, is well aware that our British monopolists are both numerous and a public danger; and he rightly insists that the effective control of monopolies is one of the most important issues that must be faced. Rightly, again, Mr. Morrison states the problem as fundamentally one of "incentives." Under private monopoly and cartel regulation the old incentives to high output and low prices achieved by lowering costs have largely been swept away, and no substitute for them has yet been provided. "As a Socialist," said Mr. Morrison, he believed he knew the way to find these incentives; but the main theme of his speech was that for the future private ownership, when it was retained, "instead of being regarded as a God-given dispensation, should be regarded as something that is required to justify its social utility" in each specific case. We cannot turn our backs on industrial combinations, which are unavoidable under certain technical conditions. So we must control them, in some cases by taking them fully into public hands, and in others by forms of supervising power varying with the requirements of each case.

The Coal Strikes

At Easington in Durham there has been for some weeks deliberate ca'canny which has reduced output to a fraction of the normal, and the Controller has met the situation by threatening to move several hundred miners to other pits, and if necessary to close the colliery. There has been trouble in other parts of Durham, and the latest news is that a preponderant part of South Wales, against the advice of the local leaders, is coming out on strike. The root of the difficulty, of course, is that the Porter Award has both removed all incentive to output from many men who cannot possibly earn more than the new minimum, and has caused resentment among men receiving more than the minimum who have been refused any advance. Mining wages normally move by percentage changes so that relative earnings for various grades and degrees are preserved. The Porter Award, in conjunction with the Government's refusal to allow consequential adjustments in higher wages to be charged up to the coal account, has upset all this. The Government, following the Porter Award, says that the remedy lies in devising a quite new wages structure; but this cannot be done in a hurry, and is likely to stir up a host of fresh problems. It is easy to say that the miners ought to have more sense of responsibility than to strike at this stage of the war. But nerves are on edge throughout the coalfields; they are likely to remain so till the Government takes the plunge it ought to have taken long ago, and brings the mines fully under public control. We are reaping the harvest of long years of procrastination and bad management. Nearly a generation has passed since the Sankey report.

London Anniversary

The London Labour Party celebrated this week the tenth anniversary of Labour's conquest of the London County Council. War has sadly interrupted the Labour Party's work for London, and has raised up for Londoners many new problems which will need courageous handling after the war. Professor Abercrombie's plan is an earnest of the will on the part of the L.C.C. to tackle these problems in a large way. For the past decade London—or rather that inner part of it which falls under the jurisdiction of the L.C.C.—has been notably well governed. In converting the poor law hospitals into the nucleus of a real public hospital service, London easily led the rest of the country. The Green Belt schemes were a notable adventure in town planning carried out under very difficult conditions. London's secondary schooling has always been good; and the Labour Party on the L.C.C. made notable strides towards the reorganisation of elementary schooling on the lines of the Haddow Report. The party also showed high competence in the handling of public assistance problems after the Guardians had been swept away. These are but a few examples out of many; and in post-war London there will be need for much more ambitious measures of reform. London will need progressive government, both within the L.C.C. area and over that much larger area which ought to be brought under some general unifying control.

Vested Interests in Electricity

The battle over the future of the electricity supply service is going on merrily behind the scenes; and quite a number of rival reports about it have now been made public. The power companies, of course, are determined to do all they can both to obstruct the extension of public ownership and to get control of as many as they can of the smaller undertakings, municipal as well as private. The municipal concerns are resisting absorption by the agents of the power companies, and are urging that the municipal right to purchase shall be exercised as it falls due, wherever that can be done without breaking up an existing economic unit. They are also urging that generation, as distinct from distribution, should be taken over throughout the country by the Central Electricity Board. As against this, a Joint Conference of the industry has now put forward a compromise plan which in effect shelves all the issues by leaving it to the Electricity Commissioners to decide each case on its merits, without reference to any general principle. In effect, each vested interest is fighting for its own hand. It is, however, plain that (a) no standardised system of charges is practicable unless the C.E.B. gets full control of generation, and (b) no general extension of supplies to the rural areas is likely except under a regional scheme of distribution, or likely at reasonable prices unless regional organisations are publicly owned.

PARLIAMENT: Soldiers' Pay

Wednesday, 1 p.m.

THE extreme sensitiveness of the House to anything that even seems a Governmental infringement of Members' prerogatives was shown in the storm that raged for half an hour before and after Willink's statement on post-war housing policy. Members objected to its being sprung on them by a method and at a time which made debate on it impossible; the Government view was that, after all, Members also complain if they haven't the chance to chew over an important statement *before* debating it.

Willink gave precise figures—100,000, etc.—of the number of "permanent" houses to be built in Britain (including Scotland). Coaxed and badgered to his feet by Scottish Socialists, the Secretary of State for Scotland refused to say what proportion of these would go to Scotland, and implied that it was useless to try to give hypothetical figures without knowing what labour would be available; which seemed to some Members to make nonsense of Willink's figures.

While these passionate exchanges were in progress, the Chief Whip's face, always a trifle haughty, wore the look of one who would shut down Parliament right away if he could; Eden intervened repeatedly in the manner of a mother whose patience is being tried beyond endurance by an exceptionally tiresome and bilious child. The Tory cheers that he can always count on for this line seemed slightly less warm than usual.

Nothing that is happening this week is likely to excite more popular and Parliamentary stir than last week's debate on Army pay and allowances. When the Prime Minister said on Tuesday that, despite all the fuss, he did not think a change in basic pay "at all likely," a deep groan went round the Labour benches; though it is generally admitted that family allowances need attention more urgently than, at any rate, the pay of single soldiers without any dependants (who must be relatively few).

Molson, who suffers from premature elder statesmanship, made almost the only speech registering complete satisfaction with the Government's "offer." Sir A. Southby reminded the House of the ancient maxim, "No Supply without redress of grievances." There were shouts of "Good old P.P.S.!" when Mander (Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Air Ministry) suggested that those pressing hardest for the increases were "interested in damaging the Government." Sir Ralph Glyn said, "I shall certainly go into the lobby with great regret against the Government": his regret evidently became, in prospect, unbearable, for he voted with the Government. The Government's belated and grudging offer reminded Buchanan "of a football team, leading by one goal to nothing, with five minutes to go, kicking the ball out for time." Hugh Lawson (Common Wealth, Skipton), who has not yet grown out of a certain initial *gaucherie*, made the point that "there should be a fair distribution of such consumable goods as we have in this country between all sections," including Servicemen.

The Government will now have to devote itself in good earnest to the task of devising (*a*) minimal concessions which can be offset by surreptitious adjustments elsewhere, and (*b*) a manoeuvre by which Members who think the concessions inadequate will be placed in the invidious position of voting against any increases at all.

Last week it was announced that the duty on armorial bearings had been abolished. This week there is further balm for aristocrats, who naturally must not be used so roughly as soldiers: those of them who can read have discovered in the written answers that they can now once more order old-style liveries for their footmen and chauffeurs, complete even with facings of gold braid where this is still in stock.

Keeling reported a bad case of vandalism (or perhaps only of Gothic prejudice) by the Air Ministry: some of the best features of an early Georgian house had been deliberately destroyed. Sinclair was apologetic, but said that the officers concerned had acted "in good faith." (Cries of "Oh!") Shinwell thought it relevant to ask how much care would be taken of the blitzed homes of working-class people; and several other Labour Members exhibited a mulish anti-cultural fixation, one even asking if there were really "anything very beautiful" about early Georgian architecture. No one reminded them that the leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution had cared far more scrupulously for just such buildings, in Leningrad and elsewhere, than any British Government department does of the houses it requisitions.

PONTIFEX MINOR

HUNGRY ITALY

DURING recent weeks the B.B.C. has, very properly, given its listeners at home and abroad several talks about the preparations UNRRA is making to relieve the hunger of the European peoples when the liberation of the Continent begins. The details it gave of this immense relief organisation were reassuring. To those who listened in France and Belgium, with ailing children round them, the prospect must have been even more welcome. Here was a promise that UNRRA will nurse these children back to health. The ships it has chartered were described, with their holds packed with all the nourishing foodstuffs, the medicines and the clothing that Europe has lacked for more than four years. Parliament, meanwhile, did its part by voting, without a whisper of dissent, £80 millions for a purpose we all have at heart.

Unfortunately these are not the only broadcasts on this subject that have reached the ears of anxious families in France. German propaganda has also been busy and it has had the advantage of describing a state of things which actually exists. What it has done is to depict the conditions prevailing—so it says—in Italy, which has been for several months under our occupation. It is not the political aspect of our achievement that here concerns us. That has bitterly disappointed all our hopes; when the German radio jests heavily on this painful subject, we must grin and bear it. What is disturbing is its account of the physical misery of the Italian people under our administration. To rub in the moral is only too easy. The French, it suggests, are simpletons if they expect that plenty will flood the land in the wake of the Anglo-American armies.

The picture drawn in these broadcasts from Rome and Berlin is alarming. The word "starvation" constantly recurs. Epidemics are mentioned, and the statement follows that drugs and medical equipment are so short that they cannot be combated efficiently. In some of these talks what purport to be precise facts are given, and in some of them the ruinous prices prevalent in South Italy are contrasted with the low cost of food in North Italy under the German administration. "Meat," we are told, "is in very short supply, and vegetables, tinned goods and fish are non-existent. The price of wheat has risen from 2 to 70 lire." In a later broadcast the price of wheat (presumably in the black market) is said to have risen to 100 lire per kilogramme; there follow further references to "the appalling undernourishment of the people." Some details are twisted with obvious malice. Thus it is said that the hungry Italians are protesting because shipments of "foodstuffs" to British ports are being made from Bari, in named ships. The "food" in question consisted, we presume, of lemons, a perfectly proper export. There may be a little more truth in the statement that the real motive for handing over the administration to Badoglio was that Amgot wished to escape the discredit for the "chaos" over which it reigned.

We should not call attention to these charges were they not generally substantiated by Americans and Englishmen returning from Italy. Moreover the *Times* recently printed a despatch from its correspondent in Naples in which he described conditions verging on famine. He said that in some districts the people were just contriving to keep alive on fruit, which, happily, is plentiful. The official excuses for the lack of bread were said to be the shortage of shipping, the local breakdown of transport and the purchases of the troops. Rationed food, it seems, was rarely obtainable and prices on the black market were soaring to fantastic heights. What has happened since that date? The curtain then descended: if the Censor had had anything cheerful to tell us, he would by now have lifted it. From such fragments of news as are available emerges a vivid if impressionistic sketch of a complete administrative failure. Pitchforked into tasks they do not understand, our authorities are incompetent to check the corruption of the Italian officials (nearly all of them Fascists) and police and the greed of the dealers and retailers. So the workers starve and the children beg.

The immense responsibility that has fallen on our authorities in Italy ought not to be discharged in silence behind a veil of secrecy. We have a right to know how they are fulfilling it. The correspondents should be unmuzzled. But that is not enough. We note that according to the *Observer* of last Sunday the Italian Trade Unions have asked that a delegation from British Trade Unions be sent out to report. What calls for investigation is not merely the food supply, but the economic plight of the masses in general. How, for example, does it stand with wages? We hope Transport House will respond. It is a painful reflection that our flag floats simultaneously over famine in Bengal and hunger in Italy. Nor is it reassuring to be told, in both cases, that the shortage of shipping is to blame. If shipping is so short to-day that we cannot spare enough to keep Italy supplied with wheat, shall we have enough to-morrow to feed France? Certainly not, unless we reverse the error made in the Italian campaign, where supplies of food were not regarded as a munition of war, and were therefore not given their due shipping priority.

Lastly, we are curious to know why UNRRA is not in charge of the feeding of Italy. We can think of only two possible reasons, both of them disquieting. It may be that UNRRA is still only a Barmecide organisation, piling up imaginary feasts. In plain words, is it ready to get to work anywhere yet? Secondly, it may be said that as mere "co-belligerents" Italians are not entitled to its mercies. Are not co-belligerent limbs liable to rickets in childhood? Can co-belligerent blood resist disease without vitamins? Who is responsible? Mr. Eden must realise that British influence for good in Europe will depend on our ability to feed the Continent not less competently than we blockaded it. Is it necessary to remind the Labour leaders in the Government that the workers of the lands we occupy are peculiarly their concern?

FILMS ACROSS THE SEA

FOR many years we have been asked to regard the British film industry as a virtuous maiden in thrall to the Hollywood dragon. The maiden has now found a new St. George in the person of Mr. J. Arthur Rank, who is prepared apparently to pit against Hollywood his considerable resources. At stake, in the lists, is not merely the growth and profitability of the British film industry, but the future of the film as a medium of world propaganda—cultural and political.

To understand this film struggle we must survey the forces arrayed on either side. The big Hollywood producers—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Paramount, 20th Century Fox, R.K.O., Warner Brothers, etc., have a wonderful domestic market of 18,000 cinemas, but by developing their foreign sales through a world-wide chain of distribution offices they have vastly increased their film profitability. A really successful American film with a world-release is now seen by over 100 million people. The most important foreign market for Hollywood is Great Britain, with some 5,000 cinemas in which the public now spend between £80 millions and £100 millions a year—60 per cent. of which enriches the exhibitor and 40 per cent. the film makers and distributors. Some of the Hollywood companies have theatres in London—shop-windows for the display of their goods—but with the exception of an interest in the Associated British Cinemas held by Warner Brothers and a share-holding in Gaumont-British held by 20th Century-Fox and M.G.M. jointly, they have not usually troubled to buy British theatre circuits. Nevertheless, because American producers before the war turned out some 600 films a year against 100 from British studios, their distributing companies, with sales offices in the principal British towns, did the bulk of the renting business in this country. In fact, the American films occupy over 75 per cent. of the British screen time, and Hollywood distributors send home between £17 and £20 millions a year as the rentals for American films. This is regrettable, but for the moment unavoidable. British studios do not make enough pictures to fill the bill; they cannot afford to spend as much on their average product as Hollywood; and because the British public has been fed on American idiom, American "star" glamour and the American director's speed and slickness, it seems to prefer the average American film to the British. At any rate British exhibitors get rich enough by showing American films.

This is the situation which Mr. Rank, having acquired a dominant position in the British film industry, is now planning to tackle on lines which merit scrutiny. He began financing British films about 1936, when he formed the General Cinema Finance Corporation. This company merged the British renting office of an American producer—Universal Pictures—with the renting company called General Film Distributors formed by the late C. M. Woolff. Film financing is a very risky business and, being a prudent business-man, Mr. Rank set about spreading his risks by tying up, first, as many "independent" producers as he could find and secondly, as many theatres as he could combine to guarantee the exhibition of the films he financed. In other words he aimed for financial safety at a vertical combine. When studios were offered to him cheaply he bought them up, for that made it easier to finance and monopolise producers. To-day he controls about 80 per cent. of the available studio space. An attempt to tie up the output of British authors through Scenario Institute Ltd. came to nothing, but it was part and parcel of his plan to secure production monopoly. And of the three big cinema circuits, he has acquired management control of Gaumont British (300 theatres), share control of Odeon (350 theatres), and it seems he has only been prevented from buying control of Associated British Cinemas by the intervention of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Rank's entry into the tangled affairs of Gaumont British first brought him into conflict with some of the Hollywood companies. Control of the Gaumont British company is vested in the Metropolis and Bradford syndicate, which in turn is controlled through the block of voting shares held by the Ostrer brothers. Fox Films, now 20th Century Fox, bought about half the Ostrer holdings, but that is another complicated story. The late John Maxwell, of A.B.C., tried to buy control from the Ostrers by paying £600,000 in cash and shares for an option on the voting shares and a holding of non-voting shares, but 20th Century Fox and

M.G.M. (to whom the Fox bankers had sold half their holding) refused to agree to the transfer. Then Mr. Rank repeated the Maxwell manœuvre, but being cleverer in bargaining, paid £400,000 for control instead of £600,000. Again the American shareholders refused to agree to the transfer of the voting shares. So the extraordinary situation obtains that Mr. Rank has working control of the Gaumont-British board but no share control of the company.

Having crossed swords with his American competitors and having consolidated his domestic position, Mr. Rank is now launching his grand attack on the Hollywood citadel. He announced recently that he had formed two new "renting" companies for the world-wide distribution of British films—an American one for the American continent and a British one for the rest of the world. To manage them he has successfully bid for the services of two American film employees—the vice-president of United Artists for the American company and the London manager of United Artists for the British. The companies carry cockily the names of the Eagle and Lion Corporation. Whether the lion is expected to lie down with the eagle or gobble it up has not been disclosed. In a statement to a film magazine Mr. Rank declared: "When I first came into this industry I had the slogan of 'trade follows the film' well in mind, and as we are largely a nation depending on exports I declared that as in the past American trade had expanded through its Hollywood pictures, so would British trade similarly expand if aided by a big British film industry." Fine aggressive sentiments—very suitable to a prospect of trade war—or alternatively to be regarded as a bargaining basis for the formation of an international film cartel. The latter intention is already being ascribed to Mr. Rank by hostile critics in the United States.

There is, in fact, reason to fear that Mr. Rank may achieve by his "Big Business" tactics one or other of two results—both objectionable from the standpoint of international economic relations. Either he will waste money and efforts (which the British film industry could employ better in other ways) in striving vainly to gate-crash a market which is definitely allergic to British films, mainly, it seems, because of the unintelligibility of the Oxford accent or English manner to American audiences, or, if he secures an international cartel agreement with his American competitors, he will be promoting the creation of a trustified Anglo-American film monopoly which would prevent the free development of national film industries and would possess dangerous power over world propaganda.

In any plans for fostering British films the old adage in the show business must be remembered: "There is a limit to the number of people you can seat in a theatre, but there is no limit to the number of people who can stay away." In other words, Mr. Rank is going the wrong way about the business. He is setting up a world-distributing company before he has proved that he can make a sufficient number of pictures with a world-appeal to sustain the organisation. What the British film industry needs is not a captain of industry to consolidate its domestic finances and wage trade war on its behalf abroad, but—quite simply—production of better quality and with more sincere human appeal. Instead of allowing Mr. Rank to spend dollars on a selling organisation in the United States, before he has the real goods to sell, the Government could promote and develop British film craft, not by foolish Quota Acts, which attend to quantity instead of quality, but by building national studios with first-class equipment to be let to native producers at rents lower than the Rank scales, and by employing "Crown" film production units, as it has done during the war, to make documentary, cultural and experimental films. By these means technicians and artists could be trained and a British screen art as original as the French might be brought into being. In no other way is the real national film problem likely to be solved.

THE ALLIES AND SPAIN

SPAIN is, and has long been, the touchstone of Anglo-American foreign policy. As in 1936 the attitude of non-intervention was significant of the general reluctance of the Governments in Washington and London to face up to the problem of Fascism, so to-day we can measure by the relations of the Foreign Office and State Department with General Franco the degree of sincerity with which the Western Allies are fighting for democracy. It is no longer open to our rulers to plead "expediency" as a factor in our policy towards Spain. The question is whether they appreciate, as the Government of the U.S.S.R. has explicitly done, that democracy, like peace, is indivisible.

It can reasonably be argued that for a time—during those critical days of 1940 and possibly up to our victory in North Africa—it paid Britain to be cautious and to "appease" General Franco. Spain could have been dangerous to us: she was (and is) an Axis satellite with a regime whose leader publicly declared his wish for an Axis victory and was prepared to do everything towards that end, even to the point of sending regular army troops to fight for Hitler. Spain would have been fully in the war against us but for that "imponderable" the Spanish people. Franco knew better than anybody that not only could he not rely on them to fight, but that he could be quite sure of their hostility and opposition to open belligerency. That is a second great debt which Britain owes to the Spanish people, the first being for having taken the preliminary shocks of the Second World War from 1936 to 1939. Had Spanish democracy in 1939 been able to fight on until September, it would then have been recognised as our ally.

From September 1939 until to-day Franco has been an ally of our enemies. He has backed his public statements with a long list of acts known to the world. They range from the despatch of the "Blue Division" to fight as an integral part of the German army in Russia to giving Italian torpedo crews facilities in Algeciras for attacks on British shipping in Gibraltar. He has not shown the slightest sign of any change; nor any reason to believe that he will or can change. Indeed, in a variety of ways, he indicates that he intends to stand or fall with Hitler.

The Teheran Declaration revived hopes in the hearts of distressed and neglected Spanish democrats. Now, they thought, the Great Powers have at last made their attitude and policy unmistakably clear:

> We shall seek the co-operation and active participation of all nations, large and small, whose peoples in heart and mind are dedicated, as are our own peoples, to the elimination of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance. We will welcome them as they may choose to come into a world family of democratic nations.

The mass of Spaniards have no doubts about their feelings on this basis, and their democratic leaders in exile have recorded their full sympathy and support for the United Nations' cause. If Spanish democrats felt joy when aware of the significance of this Declaration, Franco and his supporters were struck with dismay and despondency. But neither the joy of the democrats nor the despondency of their oppressors lasted long. There has been no word, no deed, no sign to indicate any serious intention on the part of the governments of Britain and U.S.A. to live up to these solemn promises, for one cannot consider that protests about bombs in orange cases and the temporary cutting off of oil are more than gestures of irritation with an implied indication that, if Franco will but behave a little better (or not be found out) all will be well. Sir Samuel Hoare has said as much. "If . . . Spain is really neutral, there need be no trouble between the Allies and the Spanish Government," he recently announced.

Moscow's reactions to the Franco regime and its assistance to our common enemies have never been in doubt. The Soviet Union appreciates the realities of the Spanish situation, and says so. *Red Star* describes Franco as "a faithful ally of Germany." The official radio commentator Yermashev, in an angry broadcast on February 10th, said: "The complicity of the Spanish Fascist clique has been fully established." While Franco's "militarised labour" works round the clock to increase wolfram output for German war industry, Sir Samuel Hoare continues his efforts to make Hitler's friend "see reason." One may legitimately infer from the facts that there is no accord between London and Moscow in regard to present or future policy on Spain; and this in itself demands an explanation from Mr. Eden.

The leadership of oppressed Spanish democracy is represented by a number of unknown men in Spain (unknown outside, that is) and by exiled republicans, that is by the men of the last elected Government, by exiled leaders of the trades unions and of the political parties. These leaders are here, in Mexico, and in other Spanish-American countries. Conditions and circumstances of war prevent them from getting together. Meanwhile, their enemies have not missed any opportunities of endeavouring to create disunity among them, or, when that fails, to disseminate propaganda calculated to give the impression of disunity. That differences of opinion exist among them, they themselves hardly attempt to conceal. Yet those differences are far less serious than may appear on the surface; for a score or more of allegedly irreconcilable groups are united under two heads, that of Dr. Negrin, the last constitutional Prime Minister, who is in England, and of Martínez Barrio, the Speaker of the last elected Parliament, who is in Mexico.

That there are two leaders and not one is due to two interpretations of the Constitution. Martínez Barrio (backed by Indalecio Prieto, leader of the *Partido Socialista Obrero*) affirms that, on the death of the late President, Don Manuel Azaña, the Acting Presidency devolved on him, and with it the legal right of forming a new Government. Against this, it must be remembered that, on Azaña's death, Martínez Barrio declined the Acting Presidency and that Dr. Negrin was the last Prime Minister elected by a *Cortes* based on a General Election. Moreover, at the last session of that constitutionally elected *Cortes* at Figueras in February, 1939, he received a unanimous vote of confidence. Again, while the following of Martínez Barrio consists of sections of groups in exile that are, excepting Prieto's, unimportant, Dr. Negrin has the support of not only the Communists but of the great trades unions and other important parties and bodies. The support, if any, of Martínez Barrio inside Spain cannot be estimated, while that for Negrin is, it appears, approximately the same as at the end of the Spanish War. To Spaniards of the Left Negrin symbolises uncompromising resistence to their oppressors. For purposes of practical politics to us in this country Dr. Negrin must be considered as the one and, in present circumstances, the only recognisable leader of Spanish democracy.

What is happening inside Spain is known in broad outline. There is a sullen mass-resistance to Franco (estimated at between 80 and 90 per cent. of the Spanish people) and there is a host of underground democratic movements of which the co-ordination steadily improves. In the ability of the Franco regime to survive a United Nations victory, few even among the General's own supporters any longer believe. Franco, in fact, has been losing support all round. The Church is now lukewarm towards him. Gil Robles states that he cannot rely on the rank and file of the army. The Monarchists dislike him. Big business and the landowners now think in terms of a modified regime under a different leadership that will, in a post-war Europe, be in a stronger position to protect their interests.

From the point of view of the peoples of the United Nations, the continuation in power of Franco, Falangism, quasi-totalitarianism or any reactionary regime in Spain is intolerable. To permit anything of the sort would be merely to provide a rallying point for defeated Fascism, a point of focus for a dangerous political sepsis capable of reinfecting the Continent, and hostile to Britain. The moment has come when the democracies must seriously set about solving "the Spanish problem" which, in reality, has been a problem largely of their own making. The solution is obvious. Democracy must be restored in Spain. The other democracies must assist in its restoration, and to this end they must first recognise as a Free Spanish Government the Cabinet which held power under the Constitution until it was overthrown by military rebellion assisted by the Axis. The rest may be left to the democratic Spaniards, who can settle their differences in Spain with the aid of elections which will decide the form of government demanded by the people. Until that point has been reached, Britain and the United States must act on an acceptance of the fact that the last constitutional government of Spain has as much right in law and morality to their active support as any of the Allied governments in exile.

THE PROBLEM OF THE FALLING BIRTH-RATE

DR. SPENCER PATTERSON, in a recent address to the Eugenic Society, made certain interesting observations based on a large number of biographies taken from *Who's Who*. In every group except business men "the most likely number of children which the recruit would eventually have was none at all." In an examination of 177 boys at a public school only 4 per cent. came from families of five or more children, while the percentages of the relatively sterile two and one-child families at an expensive school were 36.4 per cent. and 6.5 per cent., respectively, compared with 15.1 per cent. and 3 per cent. for the business class. Dr. Patterson attributed the serious fall in the birth-rate to two factors—late marriage and the misuse of contraceptives.

With certain exceptions, of which India and China are instances, populations throughout the world are on the downward grade. There are three possible explanations: voluntary control of conception, economic factors, and sub-fertility. Census figures show a heavy decline in live births since 1880. But there has been no parallel decline in the marriage rate, the number of wives under the age of forty-five remaining approximately the same. Indeed, in Belgium the marriage rate has actually increased, but the decline in the birth-rate has been as marked as elsewhere. There is, however, one intriguing figure. Out of 1,000 wives under forty-five the proportion under thirty-five fell from 607 in 1871 to 538 in 1921. This certainly suggests that later marriage is playing some part in the declining birth-rate. Statistics reveal an extraordinary picture of what has been happening in this respect in England since 1880. At that time the crude birth-rate and the marriage rate were both above the average. The fertility rate, never high, has since then shown a steady fall—24 per cent.—the lowest fertility rate of any European country, except France.

A committee appointed by the National Birth-Rate Commission in 1935 considered that the increasing use of contraceptives was responsible for the fall in the birth-rate. In support of this theory is the fact that in countries where the Roman Church has most influence the fall has been less than in other European countries. But the Medical Committee appointed by the Commission was not prepared to say that birth-control was solely responsible. Their findings suggested other causes, of which dietary deficiency was one. We shall return to this later.

Are economic factors responsible? Scarcely. For the drop is the greatest in those countries where the standard of living is highest. Is this to be interpreted as meaning that married couples in England and the United States are voluntarily limiting the size of their families, preferring, as some people maintain, a wireless and a car to a baby and a nursery? Or is there some other factor which is, at any rate, partly responsible?

An hypothesis put forward by Herbert Spencer that "the ability to maintain individual life and the ability to multiply vary inversely" is certainly supported by the striking, not to say alarming, fall in the birth-rate. This theory suggests that the strain on the individual of increasing competition, of the hurly-burly of modern life, levy a toll on his power of reproduction. This theory, however, is still unsupported by reliable evidence. It remains a theory. All the same, experts admit poor health almost invariably means poor reproductive power.

Assuming, then, that the falling birth-rate is due—in some degree at any rate (and this assumption is justified by evidence)—to a lowered fertility, what is the cause, or, what are the causes? As early as the first decade of the present century Sir Athelstaine Baines, referring to the falling birth-rate, wrote: "It has been held by some that a phenomenon so widely diffused over the western world must be attributed to physiological causes, such as alcoholism, syphilis, the abuse of narcotics, and so on." The same authority declared that the decline in fertility cannot be connected with diminution of material property.

Is impaired fertility responsible for the falling birth-rate and the single-child family? To try to answer this question we must turn to the medical expert. The most recent reports indicate that in a proportion of men who consult specialists because of the barrenness of their marriages, an abnormal condition of the sperm is found. In some instances this is subsequently proved to be the cause of the lack of fertility. It is, however, possible for a male with a marked degree of oligozoospermia to be fertile; while, on the other hand, various chemical factors in the semen may tend to lowered fertility even where euzoospermia is present. The truth is that both successful impregnation and consequent conception are dependent upon very many and diverse factors in both male and female. One fact is clear: the older view that a barren marriage was invariably due to some defect in the wife can no longer be held. As one authority puts it: "Constitutional factors are of much more importance than 'anatomical' factors if a large series of cases is analysed."

What, then, are these constitutional factors? Some, at least, are known. The grosser causes of sterility—syphilis, Malta fever, malaria, and other systemic diseases—dislocate the reproductive functions and are liable to lead to disturbance of spermatogenesis. Twenty-three per cent. of men who have contracted syphilis are sterile; whereas it is estimated that among the general population 10 per cent. only are non-fertile. Apart from abnormal structural defects in the genitalia, there are certain endocrine deficiencies, notably hypopituitarism, which lead to impaired fertility. It has long been recognised that chronic alcoholics and drug addicts are sub-fertile. There are probably many other extrinsic poisons, such as plumbism, which may give rise to this state.

Doubtless there are many other causes of sub-fertility which do not act directly on the generative organs, but through the medium of the intricate and delicate endocrine glands. The value of Vitamin E in cases of sub-fertility suggests that perhaps a dietary deficiency is sometimes responsible. It is generally recognised that an unbalanced diet may lead to sub-fertility. Experiments on rats have demonstrated that testicular degeneration follows a diet deficient in one or more essentials.

It must be remembered that the testicular function in men and the ovarian function in women are easily disturbed by relatively trivial causes. A change of climate, particularly excessive heat to those unaccustomed, is a well-recognised cause of menstrual dysfunction. But it is only in recent years that the sensitiveness of the testicle to both intrinsic and extrinsic agents has been established. It is known that hot climates may adversely affect testicular function: even undue heat due to the wearing of thick clothing is liable to disturb the delicately balanced mechanism of reproduction in the male.

The Committee already referred to reported that "judging from experiments on animals diet may have an influence on fecundity in human beings, though, in view of the variations in fecundity in different communities in which no difference of diet has been detected this remains to be proved." Recent work on vitamins has produced evidence that sterility and sub-fertility can and are brought about by deficiency of Vitamin E. May not research in this important field yield still further evidence?

The causes of sterility and lowered fertility in the female are much more difficult to assess. There is no means of direct examination of the gametes as there is in the male: and a recent text-book stresses that even when every possible clinical and laboratory examination has been carried out, it is impossible to state with certainty that the ovum is, or is not, defective. For this reason the problem, so far as a wife is concerned, widens and deepens. Gynæcologists undertake a general clinical examination, a local examination, and a detailed enquiry into the functions of the reproductive organs. Endocrine deficiencies are looked for, while the psychological factor is ever-present in the mind of the investigator. One fact is, however, agreed upon: that no wife should be labelled as the cause of a non-fertile union until the husband has been examined and proved to be normal. It can no longer be taken for granted that a barren marriage was necessarily due to some defect in the wife.

Lastly, it may now be asked whether contraceptives are responsible for lowering fertility? At first sight it might seem that we need look no further than this factor to explain the startling decrease in births. But the problem is not so simple. For one thing, contraceptives are, in many instances, merely used to space pregnancies; and in others to postpone conception, of the first child, and then often only for a matter of months. It is easy enough to dismiss the whole question of a falling population by attributing it to birth-control. But the facts do not support this as the sole cause. According to one authority, "A high proportion of childless marriages remains so against the wishes of the couples concerned." An American expert states that "involuntary sterility was the commonest single reason that brought patients to the clinic for gynæcological examination." A recent text-book contains this sentence: "The available statistical evidence is certainly far from adequate, but what there is favours the view that contraceptive methods in general use do not adversely influence fertility."

A well-balanced view seems to be that the use of contraceptives for a relatively short time—say, twelve months—in the case of a newly married couple, both of whom are healthy, can do little permanent harm; whereas the use of these measures over a number of years is almost certain to lead to degenerative changes in the genital organs of the woman, and to consequent sterility or at least impairment of fertility.

To sum up, a study of the falling birth-rate seems to suggest that more than one factor is responsible. Changes in fashion and ways of living have, for practical purposes, abolished the double-figure family. The use of contraceptives has made this possible. But there is sufficient evidence to justify the statement that sub-fertility is on the increase, and several reasons why this should be so have been advanced.

There is less evidence that economic factors alone can be held responsible.

I. GEIKIE-COBB

A LONDON DIARY

THE *Schwarze Korps*, the most "radical" or perhaps I should say, the most "nihilist" of Nazi papers, is quite pleased with the obliteration of German towns. It has always wanted the liquidation of European civilisation and notes with satisfaction that all "cultural goods" are being sacrificed. They do not help in the defence of Germany. A Swiss newspaper, which quotes these comments, adds that the effect of British bombing is to complete the expropriation of the German middle-class, which is now in the economic sense "proletarianised." No longer is there any individual or cultural life in bombed German cities. Hamburg, Berlin, Cologne, Mannheim, Cassel, Hanover, Leipzig are only a few of the towns that look as if they had been destroyed by an earthquake. "Life is ebbing" from these cities and the results are that Germany is becoming only an undifferentiated "mass" of homeless people and unorganised factory hands. German propaganda calls this Bolshevism, but the result of the "proletarianisation" of Germany (the work of Churchill and Air-Marshal Harris, not of the U.S.S.R.!) is more likely to be chaos, disease and European anarchy on an unimagined scale. About the success of bombing in destroying Germany's material capacity to resist, I cannot judge. But so far its moral effect on the German soldiers (who live in occupied territories) is to make them fight with the desperation of men who have nothing to lose. It is a primitive method of warfare—to pound a nation into pulp *without laying down the conditions of capitulations.* We know that Hitler wills Götterdämmerung for Germany, but why must we assist him to re-enact the heroic catastrophe of the Siegfried Myth?

* * * *

I keep meeting people who recall how in 1918 Wilson's intervention gave hope and meaning to the victory and at the same time hastened it by encouraging Germans to surrender. The only promise we have in this war is the Atlantic Charter and that, we are told, does not apply to Germany! "To whom then does it apply?" Mr. Pickthorn pertinently asked in the House of Commons the other day. When we say we do not intend any territorial acquisitions after the war, what does this mean unless we refer to German territory? Did we announce that we did not mean to acquire Swiss territory, or what?

* * *

Herbert Morrison must have known what to expect when he referred to "delegated legislation" and the danger to Parliamentary government latent in a procedure designed to prevent speed. At once the *Daily Telegraph* and a group of soured Conservatives trotted out the *New Despotism* and stood four-square for the rights of the Legislature and against the evils of Bureaucracy. How much concern for liberty is there in this attack? Judging by the rapidity with which the Tories adopted delegated legislation when they changed the Constitution and the fiscal system in 1931, the rights of Parliament only play an important part in their thoughts when vital matters like the financial orthodoxies are at stake. Mr. Morrison was in effect reminding the country that the need of measures of reconstruction at the end of this war would be as urgent as saving the value of the pound sterling. If the snail's pace of the Education Bill is anything to go by, all the vital Bills, without which we cannot rebuild England, will be indefinitely delayed unless in some form delegated legislation is accepted. But this is not the whole story. The objections to passing over so much power to the Civil Service are real and widely felt. The dilemma looks at first inescapable. But I doubt if it is. To consider solutions involving reform of Parliamentary procedure and new ideas about the way in which Bills should be drafted requires an article, not a diarist's paragraph.

* * *

I am glad to see that some of the more distinguished of our younger economists have written to the *Times* debunking Sir James Grigg's foolish claim that any substantial increase in Service pay would bring about "inflation on the wildest scale." They point out that even on the extreme assumption that the whole of the necessary amount—about two hundred millions a year—was *spent* by soldiers and their families, this would only be equal to about 4 per cent. of the total national expenditure on goods for personal consumption. As the yearly increase in wages during the war is about five hundred millions, on this score alone the War Minister's argument is a little thin. In fact, all this money would not be spent. Soldiers, as I see from the letters they send me, feel that on their present pay they can't put anything aside for after the war, as most civilian workers are doing. And in any case, the control over prices and production is now so strict that there are very few things one can buy with free money. What soldiers, and their wives, need, is a little more cash for semi-luxuries like beer, cigarettes, the cinema and to help them meet everyday expenses like rent, non-rationed foodstuffs and all the other things that at present they can only get by scraping and saving. But the case for higher pay and allowances does not have to be argued; all of us see fresh reason for it in our daily life. What is important is that the Government shouldn't get away with this sort of spurious excuse.

* * *

The Labour Party, I understand, has accepted lock, stock and barrel the food and nutrition policy of Sir John Boyd Orr. This is grand news. The war has taught us just how important a balanced and scientific diet is to health, efficiency and morale. Can we apply that lesson to our peacetime problems? In his *Food and the People* (Pilot Press, 3*s.* 6*d.*), which I have just been reading, Sir John Orr says that we can and we must. And I think his arguments are unanswerable. This little book is a brilliant piece of work. Like the others in the *Target for To-morrow* series, it deals with a particular social question not only historically, but also gives a fair and accurate summary of contemporary controversy. At the end Sir John sets out his own programme. Food, he says, is an international business: its production and distribution require international control. As for Britain, we need a planned food policy with all that this implies for our agriculture, industry, trade and health. It means an economy of full employment too. The diseases caused by malnutrition are as much economic as medical questions. It is as urgent that this book should go into people's homes as it is that its conclusions should go on to the Statute Book.

* * *

According to a friend who should know, it was not only in Hungary that traffic kept to the left, but also in Czechoslovakia and parts of Austria. One of the regulations of Hitler's New Order imposed the rule of the right all over Europe. The Budapest underground, however, for reasons of expense, was not changed over. This led to a joke in Budapest: "Everything above ground goes to the Right, everything below ground goes to the Left."

* * *

I made a bad slip last week in saying that Common Wealth had recently purchased a journal called *Town and Country Planning*. I should have said *Town and Country Review*. There has long been published a well known journal called *Town and Country Planning* which has not been sold to Common Wealth or anyone else. I hasten to apologise to its proprietors, the Town and Country Planning Association.

* * *

A friend who has recently moved to South Kensington, and who had long been a member of the Labour Party in another area, recently rang up the secretary of the South Kensington Party to ask to transfer her membership to his district. He replied that the Party was very small and rightly carried out no activities during the political truce. My friend urged him to recommence activities. He replied that people who held views of that kind were usually Communists. Or, perhaps, if she really wished to be active, she would be most at home in Common Wealth.

* * *

To nip in the bud a rat that he smelt floating in the air would be easy for the A.P. correspondent who recently sent the following message, which was reproduced in the British press.

> If the United Nations placed a fence round Japan and "let her stew in her own juice," they would be creating a festering sore with permanent explosive tendencies.
>
> CRITIC

CHANSON INONU

(After Ernest Dawson)

Last night, ah, yesternight when Papen came to dine
The shadow of the Big Three seemed to spread
Athwart the feast between the *Sauerkraut* and the wine;
But though he wooed me with Teutonic passion,
And though through Cairo Nights I kept my head,
I have been faithful to the Allies in my fashion.

Long, long I have directed the Ballet Ankara,
My star attractions both sides strove to please;
At Cairo and Adana they praised my repertoire,
And though impervious to belligerent passion,
Through all sweet seductions of strip-tease
I have been faithful to the Allies in my fashion.

I have danced "*Façade*," I have danced "*Rendezvous*,"
I have danced varieties of the pirouette,
I have repeated "*Les Divertissements Inonu*,"
The object of unprecedented passion,
I have been doped with Third Reich drugs—and yet
I have been faithful to the Allies in my fashion.

I have ogled all alike with eyes of the gazelle,
Dancing with many veils before the maddened throng,
But when the Allies rushed me, and my yashmak fell,
They knew me unresponsive to their passion
And said my entertainment was too long.
I have been faithful to the Allies in my fashion.

I cried for bigger contracts and for stronger arms,
When the Big Three were kneeling at my feet—
Surely I must defend my unprotected charms!
But something suddenly has killed their passion.
Yet, though I only dance the "*Turkish Suite*"
I have been faithful to the Allies in my fashion.

SAGITTARIUS

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to F. W. Walbank.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

When the mother of a Wallasey boy caught in the act of damaging Corporation property was told of her son's act, she replied that he had as much right to do damage as anyone else as the trees were public property.—*Liverpool Daily Post.*

Yugoslavia springs into the news with the report that Capt. Randolph Churchill, the Prime Minister's son, has arrived in that war-torn country and has met Marshal Tito, leader of the patriot army.—*Evening World.*

"Although every zoo in England has a liquor licence, there has never yet been a case of drunkenness recorded at any of them."—Statement to Paignton (Devonshire) Licensing Justices.

In evidence P.C. Thomas Roberts said defendant was a Jehovah's Witness, and when he stopped her and told her she would be reported for not having a red rear light, she looked up at the full moon, which was shining brightly that night, and said: "You are ignoring God's gift from above."—*Cambrian News.*

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE MACHINE

This article is taken from a forthcoming book by Hsiao Ch'ien, Chinese writer and journalist: "The Dragon Beards Versus the Blueprint" (Pilot Press). It deals with the problem of how China is to adapt herself culturally to the West in the post-war world.

THE writer and the machine are natural antagonists. The machine by its nature is a persistent threat to every form of craft, and literature, whatever "progress" we achieve, must remain hand-made. So we should not be surprised when we find writers denouncing the machine: what we must discover is whether it is a disinterested hatred, and therefore noble, or whether it is simply egotistical. The former springs from reason, while the latter can only be sentimental.

Ever since the Industrial Revolution writers in England have been concerned with the effect of the machine on human life. Samuel Butler, Wells, Kipling, Bennett, Forster, Huxley, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf—all these have dealt with its impact.

The suspicion about the machine probably arose simultaneously with the machine itself. One certainly cannot fail to feel the horror of industrial squalor in Dickens though he was far too hearty to philosophise about it. In the genteel *Cranford*, the loom of the machine can also be detected. But one of the first open attacks on the machine among the English novelists was by Samuel Butler in 1872. A fierce battle was already then waged between the Machinists and the Anti-machinists in his *Erewhon*, costing the lives of half of the total population. Naturally the Anti-machinists won the day. The Erewhonians were good-humoured in their dislike of the machine and in many ways reasonable as compared with the hysteric citizens in the streamlined Utopia of Aldous Huxley. All the same, the Erewhonians were deeply worried about the domination of the machine and the possibility of their one day being classified according to their horse-power.

Mr. H. G. Wells's scientific romances are the blueprints of a believer—the only wholehearted modern believer—in the Machine. We realise when reading them that the slovenliness of the world infuriated him—he wanted to tidy it up, even at the expense of the individual. He called old-fashioned liberalism "mental habits acquired in an evil time," and in his promised land, his "Modern Utopia," he wants the individual "not only in good health, but in training. One rarely meets fat people, bald people, or bent or grey." Every person in his ideal world must be "promptly and certainly organised . . . anyone missing can be traced and found." He wants a file with entries for every one of the 1,500,000,000 members of the world state, like a biologist's card index. This regimentation applies not only to human beings, but to buildings. "Any house, unless it be a public monument, that does not come up to its rising standard of health and convenience will be pulled down by the State at the expense of the owners. Any citizen indecently dressed or ragged or dirty or publicly unhealthy, or sleeping abroad homeless, will be arrested." At this point we begin to recognise a nightmare glimpse of contemporary Europe. Indeed, we should admire Mr. Wells's prophetic powers, for in 1903 he had already foreseen the inevitability of sacrificing the individual to the group. He prophesied that "the individual will dwindle as the state grows or organises" and he accepted this frankly as a necessary evil. He even forecast the prospects for the artist in this new society, with "students in an art school working in competition to design an electric train."

But few of his contemporaries felt the same, and his juniors have taken the opposite point of view; Mr. Wells is a very eminent exception. From my reading of modern English literature I have gained the impression that every serious writer here is—explicitly or not—a twentieth-century Rousseau, advocating an immediate, if not a complete return to nature. This is interesting, especially when one remembers that Britain was the cradle of the Industrial Revolution.

The case for the Rousseauites and against Mr. Wells was provided by Mr. Aldous Huxley when in 1932 he warned the world against industrialisation in his anti-Utopian romance *Brave New World*. In this novel he imagines the horrors of a completely mechanised world. Children are born and reared in the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre. They are fed with tablets and synthetic music from the machine, and Westminster Abbey becomes a kind of cabaret with an organ spilling out scent and colour. Everyone is expected to worship a god named Ford. Then comes John the Savage—who, I suppose, is really John the Baptist, a prophet straight from the wilderness. Here is his argument with the Controller who speaks for the machine while Savage represents the child of nature. When the Controller, said:

> "We prefer to do things comfortably."
>
> "But I don't want comfort," said Savage, "I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness, I want sin."
>
> "In fact," said Mustapha Mond, "you're claiming the right to be unhappy."
>
> "All right, then," said Savage, defiantly, "I'm claiming the right to be unhappy."
>
> "Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen to-morrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind."
>
> There was a long silence.
>
> "I claim them all," said Savage at last.
>
> Mustapha Mond shrugged his shoulders. "You're welcome," he said.

From this conversation one gathers that the Savage is not quite logical. Is it because Mr. Huxley's objection to the machine is sentimental, rather than rational? If the Savage (or Mr. Huxley, for that matter) had been a miner, digging in the dark, hundreds of feet below ground, or a sailor, battling against waves and gales, he would almost certainly be willing to exchange danger for the safety offered by the machine. He would be glad of any device, a compass or a mechanical digger, which would safeguard his life. No doubt Mr. Huxley means his Savage to stand as a colourful contrast in the nightmare Utopia he has created. The Savage drinks only mustard and hot water, and escapes from the ordered modern world to a lighthouse at Guildford, Surrey. The Savage declares he does not mind where he goes—"Anywhere, so long as I can be alone."

* * *

In China we have felt the benefits of science in a very different way. In the first place, the machine was derived from the Renaissance, but we Orientals have never nurtured it. Science is alien to us, and we accepted it in its applied form only because of its obvious advantages of comfort and security. The London buses of to-day are a development of the Victorian horse-omnibus, and who knows, perhaps the next development will be air transport over London, with aerial conductresses shouting "Hold tight, we're taking off!" But the motor buses in Hongkong or Shanghai have no tradition behind them. English wireless sets are, in a way, the successors of pianolas and musical boxes, at least to a foreigner like myself, but the wireless sets in China seem just like miracles dropped from heaven. (I am speaking for my own generation and the one before.) But our next generation will be machine-minded; they will take it all for granted. It is the business of the Chinese intellectuals to see that they do *not* take it for granted. They must study the benefits of science, and its potential dangers. The machine was introduced into Japan with a jerk; hence her present tragedy. China only escaped by not introducing the machine at all—thanks to her traditional bigotry. Now, having bled beneath the rage of the tanks, the devastating power of the Zero planes, she has begun to accept the machine in real earnest—though I would not say wholeheartedly. If the machine is accepted by China without some form of "control-switch" there is no reason why it should not produce the same result as in Japan. The installation of a control-switch is just as important as the introduction of the machine.

What force constitutes this switch? It is not a simple question. First of all, we can see its national aspects. In Britain, traditional respect for the individual seems to me to be the switch. Britain remains a place fit for human beings in spite of the Industrial Revolution because there are certain things that people simply will not allow. Liberalism has so far formed a kind of safeguard against the domination of the machine. To me, the English always seem to be saying, through Mr. Forster or somebody else, "Use the machine gently . . . gently . . ."

HSIAO CH'IEN

ABYSS

When the foundations quaked and the pillars shook,
I trembled, and in the dark I felt the fear
Of the photograph my skull might take
Through the eye sockets, in one flashlit instant,
When the crumbling house would obliterate
Every impression of my sunlit life
With one impression of black final horror
Covering me with irrecoverable doom.
But the pulsation passed, and glass lay round me,
And I arose from the acrid dust, and in the night
I walked through the clattering houses,
A prophet seeking tongues of flame.

Against a background of cloud, I saw
The houses kneel, exposed in their abject
Centennial human prayer: "O fate,
Spare us from grief that punishes our neighbours."
And the heads of all men living, looked through,
Revealed the same shameless entreaty.

Then in the icy night, indifferent to our
Sulphurous nether fate, I saw
The dead of all time float on one calm tide
Uplifted on the points of stars, above
This town whose walls of brick and flesh
Are transitory dwellings of the spirit
Which flows to that enormous sky of death.

The streets were filled with London prophets,
Saints of Covent Garden, Parliament Fields,
The Heath, Lambeth, and Saint John's Wood Graveyard,
Who cried in Cockney fanatic voices:
"In the midst of loif is death." And they all kneeled
And prayed against the misery manufactured
In factories, the pride of houses,
Ambition of palaces, vain hope of Churches,
And they worshipped children and simple flowers,
And opened slum windows on to angels
Who climbed up all the sooty steeples,
Like steeplejacks or poor chimney-sweeps.

And they sang: "We souls of the abyss,
Dancing in frozen peace of upper air,
Naively familiar with the stars and angels,
We say: 'Rejoice in the abyss!
For hollow is the centre of the skull,
The rumour in the rose, the vacuum
Drifting under pale gold of Saint Paul's Cross.
Unless your lives accept the space of death
At the centre of your building and your loves,
Within the bells of flowers and bells of towers,
All human aims are hatred and denial,
Each life is lived upon the death of others,
And the terrible averted face
Of every man and woman, cuts, like a sword,
The smile from every neighbour face.'"

STEPHEN SPENDER

THE PLEASURES OF THE EYE

ONE of the less unpleasant symptoms of middle age is an increasing taste for the English School of water-colour drawing. When you are young you are so busy discovering the great masters from Giotto to Picasso that really you can't be bothered with such minnows as Prout and David Cox. But as the wrinkles portray your character upon your face you come to have a fellow-feeling with these mild, observant, ruminative painterlings. They dawdle in Venice or the little towns of Normandy, they sit by rivers gazing at mill-wheels or weirs, they dwell upon the melancholy charms of ruined castles and grass-carpeted abbeys, they draw consolation from glades and downs and sunsets and the shepherd's pipe.

The annual exhibition of English drawings at Agnew's offers just such pleasures for our vicarious enjoyment. The artist communicates his mood, though he may be as dim a performer as Havell or Buckler or Francia. Even the men of genius, Gainsborough and Girtin and Constable and Cotman, deal as a rule in the same kindly, elegiac emotions, while they give to them a very different intensity, Turner alone in this School expresses the urgent ecstasies of youth, anticipating the tremendous intoxication of the Wagnerian orchestra. The most staggering work in this exhibition, I should say, is his watercolour of the Splügen—a "great" picture though only a foot square. But Girtin's *Old Water Mill* is, in its tranquil way, hardly less remarkable. And there are two tiny pen-and-ink sketches by Constable that produce, so to speak, as much horse-power per square inch as any landscape drawings I have seen. The inquisitive will find in this show many agreeable surprises. One enigma remains: Why does Copley Fielding still excite the covetousness of collectors, where all the other equally deplorable Victorian favourites have become unsaleable? For my part, I would rather sink my savings in a scheme for gold mining at the South Pole. In neither case could I hope to get my money back, but at least I should not have on my walls a revelation of man's unconquerable triviality.

The Redfern Gallery is showing, among other things, a group of early pictures by Christopher Wood—attractively stylish and painter-like, if rather lacking in intensity; and another of pictures by a painter from Georgia called Khmeluk, most of them from Sir Michael Sadler's collection. He is eminently a decorative painter with uncommon tact in handling pigment. And though he always uses dark colours one would like to take him from his easel and set him to paint *cassoni* or *dessus de porte* or rather their modern equivalents. The best of his pictures in this show is called *The Pond in the Wood*. He flicks his paint on in shapes that reveal great control of the brush. If his work is superficial, it is unpretentious and the craftsmanship is extraordinary.

The little gallery at Lewes called Miller's has several times been noticed in these columns. One wishes there could be something similar in every country town. The present exhibition is of three painters, Claude Rogers, Quentin Bell and Robert Buhler. Mr. Rogers is the oldest and best known. I don't find in his work the expression of any very strongly marked personality, but it is a common fault to-day to overstress idiosyncrasies. The Renaissance painters were most of them so little anxious to paint differently from others that experts still squabble about the attribution of some great masterpieces. Mr. Rogers's pictures are accomplished, sensitive and enjoyable. Particularly good are the *Painting Lesson* and *Southport*. Of Mr. Quentin Bell's work I have not seen enough to attempt any definition of his character as a painter. But it is undeniably rather disconcerting. His painting can be very bad; can be very workmanlike; can also be very original. Some of his Still Lives are the oddest jumble of things balanced on top of one another like a conjurer's paraphernalia. And there is a Biblical scene—*The Finding of Moses*, that suggests a scene from *Aïda* painted by a rebellious disciple of David. I don't think Mr. Bell has yet discovered his channel but he paints with great character and is certainly an artist to watch. Of Mr. Buhler, who is a Swiss born in London, I had hitherto seen only occasional paintings in omnibus shows, but these always held my attention. He uses very little contrast of colour, and still less of tone. The result is delicate and a little Whistlerian but more solid, reminding one of a small concert of wood-wind instruments. His sense of design is admirably nice and I find him a most sympathetic and promising painter. There is a picture by him called *Deserted Seaside* that has haunted my memory for a week—some buildings on a sea-front seen from across a wide stretch of sand.

ROGER MARVELL

THE MOVIES

"The Fallen Sparrow," at the London Pavilion
"Standing Room Only," at the Plaza
"The Russian Story," at the Tatler
"Remous," at the Carlton, Tottenham Court Rd

The first minute of *The Fallen Sparrow* tells. Close-up of two hands in a railway carriage stretching forward to take a revolver from a bag; the zip opening yawns with a whine like a bullet; then the man quickly pockets the revolver and is looking out of the window when the train goes into a tunnel; he confronts his own tense features in the glass. Perfect beginning, but it would need a masterpiece, from the mind of some Simenon of the films, to keep it up. Richard Wallace isn't quite in that class. His tricks of tension and visual glitter keep one alert; he can stretch a moment or build up a climax. The manner is beautifully all there. But the matter!—sometimes it goes and sometimes it doesn't, and it mixes two worlds. One world is the psychological thriller of the International Brigader (John Garfield) returned from a concentration camp with a neurosis that needs resolving in violence: good and original. The other world consist of clubfoots, pretenders to the French throne, flags for which men will die in New York apartments, and "information" that is never divulged but makes living precarious for those who possess it. The legend in the background, the hocus-pocus mystery, isn't nearly as convincing as it should be: it compares poorly, for example, with the same element in *The Maltese Falcon*—a film, by the way, to which it owes a thing or two. But although *The Fallen Sparrow* may just fail by the highest standard, it has many excellent turns and—except for some over-weedy patches of dialogue—it stimulates the eyes and the nerves continuously.

Standing Room Only—had you guessed?—is comedy about living space in Washington. Gently amusing, traditional farce spiced with topical jokes, Fred MacMurray sniffing after a war contract and pretending to be a butler, Roland Young in nervous possession of an almost empty mansion. Paulette Goddard masquerades as a secretary masquerading as a cook. I suppose there will be farces about the tyre shortage coming along. This isn't a witty film like *The More the Merrier*, but I found it funny.

The Russian Story is an anthology, skilfully worked together, from the historical films which have been Russia's unique contribution to the cinema. It is history as seen in terms of war and revolution, the masses and their leaders: Nevsky awaiting the Teuton onslaught across the ice, Peter the Great forging armies to cut a pathway to the sea, Suvorov, Lenin, Stalin. Once more we admire the massive effects, the snapshots of grief and pillage that shade unnoticeably into newsreels of the present. Joseph Burstyn has succeeded in giving a single impetus to these epic fragments. There are gaps, one of which (since invasion is a recurring theme) may strike even a casual film-goer. Napoleon's march on Moscow is only referred to in a single sentence. Odd! The one film the Russians should have made long ago—*War and Peace*—they are only now, I am told, attempting. *Suvorov*, in the same programme, reveals again one of the best historical pieces the Soviet cinema has produced.

Another revival, *Remous*, is disappointing. Rather vulgar French *Lady Chatterley*, with more sympathy for the husband, a sleek footballer as lover, and a technique that has faded. The programmes at the Carlton are something of a lucky dip. Last week there was *Crime et Châtiment*, which can always be seen again; next week *Marie*—for Adults Only.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"Desert Highway," at the Playhouse

Mr. Priestley's new play is lively and fascinating. Like *They Came to a City*, it is part of Mr. Priestley's democratic crusade and attempts to say to the Army what that play tried to tell to civilian audiences. It is a similar but a better play. The little group of tank-men, marooned in the desert, argue, quarrel and speculate as soldiers really do, in camp and on the battlefield. It does not seem, as it did with the travellers waiting on the ramparts of Utopia, as if Mr. Priestley had brought them there to debate by some dramatic trick. These are men who know that they—and their world—are in a mess, yet they still talk about pubs and women and cabbages. Kings and wars seem impersonal and inevitable. All the same a man fights and prefers starvation to surrender. Why? Only the Jewish sergeant, whom Stephen Murray endows with all the grandeur and tragedy of his people, senses the answer. Because the struggle and the suffering are meaningless, just as they are historic, unless in them men rediscover their essential brotherhood. So Mr. Priestley takes us back two thousand years to the same spot in the desert, where six men are asking the same questions with an equally intense despair. This interlude is difficult to follow, but because it does so much to put the play into its historical perspective, it is justified. It is a tribute to A.B.C.A. that it should officially sponsor this honest and effective play. From an excellent cast, two other performances stand out: Stanley Rose as a Cockney trooper; and John Wyse as the cynical Oxford graduate whose disillusion cannot quite subdue his hope.

Correspondence

NEW MODEL HOUSES

SIR,—The chief thing that is wrong with present housing standards is not the type of materials used. The faults are bad planning, skimping in size, wrong use of materials and non-use of well-known amenities such as central heating, refrigeration, materials easy to keep clean and economic in upkeep, i.e., we do not allow architects to design our houses, we build them as cheaply as possible and let or sell them at the highest possible price.

Mr. Donald Gibson, while recommending factory-made houses, is, quite rightly, very cautious about advising any particular type or method. It is all experimental at present, and very little done of that; such a method is "probable," "it should be possible," "it is almost certain." Nothing definite.

I venture to suggest that there is no method at present known of fabricating factory-produced houses that makes them as easy to produce or as effective a shelter as the site-built house, all other things as to plan, fittings, etc., being equal. In speed of production, as a home and a shelter, from the appearance and cost of upkeep point of view, the site-built house is still the best. I agree that a factory-produced house may be invented equal to the site-built, but it has not arrived yet.

This applies to the shell of the house, the foundations, the walls and the roof. So far as fittings are concerned, I agree fully with Mr. Gibson that we can now easily manufacture all such things of first-class quality to fit out all the houses we need.

It may, however, be argued that we shall be justified in accepting something less than the best for the shell of the house in order to get speed of production, and to use "the considerable areas of factory space and large amount of semi-skilled engineering labour" that exist.

It has yet to be shown that so far as speed is concerned, the factory house can beat the site-built house when the full cycle of production is taken into consideration. A house is not like a motor car that can be completely finished in the factory; it must be built where it has to stand, so that a very great proportion of the labour used must be on the site.

I wish advocates of factory-made houses did not harp so persistently on present factory space and unskilled labour. No doubt great industrial concerns,

which have had huge factories built for them for war purposes by the Government, would like to keep them going after the war on the same terms as they have enjoyed for war production.

With regard to the labour, it did in a very short time become exceedingly skilled in the purpose for which it was required, i.e., the production of munitions of war. This same labour can be equally adaptable for house building; for factory-made houses if these can be shown to be as good as or better than site-built, but, if not, then for healthy work in the open air on houses or for workshop work on prefabricated fittings for the site-built houses.

The real difficulty facing us in our housing problem has nothing to do with materials or types; it is in the character of the building trade as it is at present organised. The problem, apart from the questions of land and finance, can only be solved by the organisation of the building trade as a public service, as against its present function as a profitsmaking machine.

With such organisation we can not only build all the houses we want, but we can also pull down and rebuild the 75 per cent. of our present buildings, which are out of date and worn out, within the next 25 years.

TOM BRADDOCK, F.R.I.B.A.

ANGLO-DUTCH UNION

SIR,—Mr. Burger rejects my suggestion of a free union of Britain and Holland and says in reply that the machinery for co-operation already exists in the Netherlands Military Authority (N.M.A.). But surely this is only the temporary machinery for the state of siege after liberation? Or has Mr. Burger, who assisted in creating the N.M.A., heard of some idea of turning it into a permanent institution. The Dutch people would certainly violently resist any such proposal. They have sworn death to military government of all kinds. Mr. Burger knows how the Dutch Underground Movement feels about this, since an article, entitled "Is London (i.e. the Dutch Government in London) realistic?" which appeared recently in the *Het Parool*, the most widely circulated and influential underground paper in Holland, sharply attacked the proposed N.M.A. It also attacked Mr. Burger, personally, for his connection with it.

Does Mr. Burger really believe that the N.M.A. will find it easy "to enter into the mentality of the population?" The twenty and more letters I have received this week from Dutchmen in the Forces in this country show clearly that the N.M.A. has not in fact begun "to enter into the mentality" of this exiled band of Dutchmen in England. Not one of those letters expresses any resentment at my proposals; they do show a deep disappointment with the Dutch Government and they respond to the idea of a wider democratic future for Holland. Most of them welcome the idea of Anglo-Dutch Union, one of them even suggests incorporating, immediately, the Netherlands Brigade into the fighting British Army. They want to fight.

"Even the Dutch Government will be unable to lay a definite foundation for a future Anglo-Dutch co-operation unless the British people relinquishes the view that the infamous German cruelties are nothing but propaganda," writes Mr. Burger. Like the Editor of the *N.S. & N.*, I, too, am at a loss to understand this paragraph. Doesn't Mr. Burger read English newspapers? Is he not in touch with English people? Doesn't Mr. Burger know that the reluctance to discuss these atrocities springs in the main from the horror which English people of all classes and creeds feel about atrocities they are impotent to prevent? He should talk to the toolmakers, machine operators, and welders, men and women in any factory. They don't need German refugees to tell them.

And now I come to the most distressing part of Mr. Burger's letter. This alleged failure to understand Nazi bestiality is given as an *excuse for the unwillingness of the Dutch Government to lay any foundation for future Anglo-Dutch co-operation.* On this flimsy pretext we are to drift apart, only, I suppose, to meet again when another world war forces us into the same military camp.

Customs agreements with Belgium are fine; so are regulations for the maintenance of the gold standard. But they cannot give Holland the permanent security she needs and which by reason of her size she is unable to provide herself.

Britain stood by us in our darkest hour; she will stand with us in our hour of liberation. It is for the Dutch people to see that we stand together forever with other nations of good will in a common front against aggression and that we work together after this war both to maintain the peace and to contribute to our mutual prosperity.

W. VAN LEER

SOEKARNO

SIR,—In his article from "Songgram to Soekarno," Mr. Peter de Mendelsohn classifies the Javanese Nationalists among "the Quislings of East Asia." We Netherlanders have always regarded Soekarno as an opponent and his political action has more than once caused him to be condemned or interned. Those, however, who knew him, considered him as an unstable politician whose opportunism made him unaccountable. But no one has ever looked upon him as possessed of the despicable characteristics that mark a Quisling.

To judge whether a man is or is not a Quisling should be left to the members of his own nationality. At a time when in Dutch circles Soekarno was called a Quisling, Dr. Maamoen, an Indonesian Nationalist, working in London as an official of the Dutch Government, wrote in *Vrij Nederland*: "We shall never be able to look upon the collaboration of these Indonesian Leaders with the Japanese powers of occupation as an act of treason It is unfair to put them upon the same level as Mussert and his group, who are guilty of cowardly actions."

This is the right verdict. In his endeavour to achieve the independence of his people Soekarno is an opportunist. At the outbreak of the war with Japan he began by considering co-operation with the Dutch, whom he had always fought, to be the right policy. For he was convinced that the Japanese were even more dangerous than the Dutch. Once, however, the Japanese had become masters of Java, he took the side of the Japanese—this at least, is what the Japanese say—either because he thought that henceforth they were the only people with whom he would have to deal, or perhaps, because he was enticed by the political promises of the Japanese.

It is our conviction as well as that of many of his fellow nationalists, that by his decision he is doing a disservice to the interests of his people. But it is a dilution of our sense of abhorrence for the crime of a Quisling or a Mussert to use their name in order to brand the deeds of people whose national honesty is not in doubt, even in the eyes of opponents.

M. VAN BLANKENSTEIN,
Editor, *Vrij Nederland*

THE FUTURE OF AUSTRIA

SIR,—Mrs. Bönsch seems to me to take a very extraordinary view when he dismisses all talk of Vienna's "top heaviness" as the propaganda of reactionaries. I can remember many journalists who could in no way be accused of lack of sympathy with Vienna's progressive municipal government, and also many of my friends among the Social Democrats of the city who agreed with me—in fact who first made the lack of balance clear to me in its details. And when Mrs. Bönsch instances Paris as a city that managed to be a great and prosperous centre of culture without any special international regime, he is proving my point: Paris happens to be the capital of a large Empire. Can Mrs. Bönsch deny that Vienna stagnated between

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the two wars, and became a mere shadow of its former self? And can he deny that Vienna's "long-standing culture" suffered severely as a result? To talk, as I have heard fanatical "little Austrians" talk in the past, as if that culture had nothing to do with German culture, is to me entirely ridiculous. Austria had, of course, her own excellent poets and dramatists, but they always considered they were the brothers in art of the great poets and dramatists in the German lands beyond their borders, and Viennese theatres were famous for their performances of Goethe and Schiller as well as of Raimund and Nestroy. Nor, to take one instance among the musicians, can one say that Beethoven was not a part of all that is best in German culture simply because he spent much of his working life in Vienna.

Ideally, one would like Vienna to be the economic and cultural centre of a federation of Danubian States. This possibility, however, seems to have been ruled out by the decisions of the Allies at the Moscow Conference, and my suggestion was merely an attempt to indicate a way of giving Vienna the same significance under these restricted conditions. I purposely left the outlines vague, because it is futile at the moment, while the fighting is still developing, to define such an arrangement too closely; and in spite of Mrs. Bönsch's objections, I still believe that Vienna's problem cannot be solved if it is left to be merely the capital of a small Austrian Republic. Improved economic conditions in South-Eastern Europe, and further development of Austria's natural resources, says Mrs. Bönsch, will do the trick; but as all this will not redress the bad economic balance of the country as a whole, I do not see how it will prevent a sovereign Austria being a victim, as so often before, of the next recession in the trade cycle.

JOHN LEHMANN

WEST DERBYSHIRE

SIR,—May I add several points to Gunner Subaltern's remarks on the West Derbyshire election?

(1) The disgusting attitude of the "Popular Press,' especially the more popular sections of it. I cannot understand why what is regarded by sober-minded persons as a major political issue should be reduced to a "stunt." There must be extraordinarily little political understanding in H.M. Forces if it takes cheap Popular Press stunts to raise the "Gunner Subaltern's" mess to the dimmest perception of political realities, let alone to arouse any real interest.

It seems to me, as "Gunner Subaltern" says, that I received too much publicity, especially regarding the colour of my hair and skirt rather than the colour of my political views or any telling point which I may have managed to make—out of all proportion to the main political issues which were undoubtedly at stake. This form of journalistic irresponsibility has undoubtedly been used as a panacea for Conservative ills. If they won, then they did so in spite of this formidable Foreign Invasion; if they lost, then "Gad, Sir, it was dashed unsporting of this foreigner to enter the lists." In fact, they stretched their imaginations (ever very elastic) to such an extent that the Soviet Embassy was constrained to issue an official disclaimer, despite which questions are still being raised about me in Parliament by some disgruntled supporters of these remarkably unsportsmanlike protagonists of political nepotism.

While surveying this peculiarly unsavoury attitude of the Popular Press towards current by-elections, I am impressed by the fact that their standards of political journalism is likely to deteriorate progressively with their fear of Conservative failure at the polls. This unpleasant tendency has already been demonstrated at Bury St. Edmunds.

BARBARA MOORE-PATALEEWA

RUSSIAN LITERATURE

SIR,—In his review of my book *25 Years of Soviet Russian Literature* on February 26th, Dr. Bowra mentions my "shocking statement that Bezymensky in his poem on Mayakovsky's suicide calls Dante 'that son of a bitch.'" Dr. Bowra explains that "Bezymensky does not speak of Dante but of d'Anthès who killed Pushkin in a duel." I presume that Dr. Bowra has read the original of Bezymensky's poem, and am grateful to him for "exploding" this "howler" of mine, but in the interests of truth I must decline primary responsibility for this "atrocity." Although, in writing my book, I tried whenever possible to go back to the original Russian sources, in the case of Bezymensky's poem I was unable to lay hands on the Russian text and relied on the English version by Mr. George Reavey in *Soviet Literature: An Anthology*, where the name (see p. 376) is given as "Dante." Both the name of the principal editor of that anthology (Mr. Marc Slonim), a well-known Russian writer and journalist, and the name of the translator seemed to me authoritative enough to warrant confidence, even though the name of Dante appeared to be rather out of place in the context. It simply did not occur to me that Mr. Reavey could confuse Dantes (as the name of Pushkin's murderer is usually spelt in Russian) with Dante. This only shows how dangerous it is sometimes to rely on translations even when the translator is supposed to be a bilingual person (this is how Mr. Reavey was advertised by his publisher). Unless, of course, "Dante" was just a misprint.

GLEB STRUVE

HAMLET'S LAST WORDS

SIR,—While greatly appreciating Desmond MacCarthy's interesting article on *Hamlet* there is a point he makes at the conclusion which by all the evidence of the text is, I believe, quite erroneous.

There is no reason to suppose that Hamlet's "Oh, I die, Horatio" indicates a last minute desire to live; the evidence is all to the contrary, for he has just concluded an impassioned plea to Horatio to live, in terms which indicate how hard he believes living to be. He begs him to absent himself from "*felicity*" and pleads with him: "in this *harsh* world draw they breath in *pain*" (italics are mine). There surely is no love of life here, and his own desire to live at that moment is only in so far as it seems to him necessary that the truth of the tragedy should be told.

I have not yet seen Mr. Helpmann's Hamlet, and it may be that I have not seen so many Hamlets as Mr. MacCarthy, though I began with Forbes Robertson and have seen every production in London since, but Hamlet is sufficiently a "hobby" with me for Mr. MacCarthy (I hope) to treat my contention seriously and your readers, perhaps, to have some discussion on the matter.

SYBIL MORRISON

[Mr. MacCarthy writes:

Of course, if he likes, an actor can deliver the cry "Oh, I die, Horatio," as though the words were a statement of fact; and make Hamlet die like a stoic. But if his interpretation of the part has emphasised the pathos of it (like Mr. Helpmann's) then, I suggested, he should seize upon the pathos inherent in them: the pathetic fact that an instinctive reluctance to die may fasten upon the heart of even the most pessimistic philosopher. However much we may condemn life rationally, we may cling to it as it slips away; that is the sort of fact Shakespeare never forgot.—ED., *N.S. & N.*]

B.A.S.I.C.

SIR,—In the recent arguments about Basic English an oft-repeated criticism was the misuse of the word "basic" in this sense. But surely it is an abbreviation of British American Scientific International Commercial English, and not the English word that is here intended.

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

THE great historians of the Nineteenth Century, all men of strong convictions and prejudices, were almost figures of fun to the last generation. Now they are slowly coming into their own again and Froude would appear to have achieved the immortality which was never seriously denied to Macaulay and Carlyle. But what of Green and Freeman, Stubbs and Acton? Above all, what of Henry Hallam, the patriarch of Whig history, the Founding Father of a great and noble tradition? *The Constitutional History of England from the Accession of Henry VII to the death of George II* was first published in 1827 and ran into many editions. It was studied eagerly and earnestly by the youthful Victoria and Albert. But now, I suspect, it is little read, though it is still obtainable in the admirable *Everyman* series. Yet Hallam possessed splendid qualities as an historian and was the master of a trenchant masculine prose.

It must be confessed that there is little in the private life and character of Henry Hallam to rouse the feelings or excite the imagination. Though he was born at the time of the American Revolution and his early manhood exactly coincided with the Napoleonic Wars, these great events clearly made no significant impact on his later life. By the time he had left Eton and Oxford his mind was firmly set in the cast of the eighteenth century. It never lost this mould, though he lived far on into the age of iron and steel and did not die until 1859. The truth is that Hallam was never troubled by the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. His style of living was always easy, and increasingly so as time advanced. His early years as a barrister on the Oxford circuit were no more than a short prelude to a life of full economic independence devoted to historical and literary studies. A judicious marriage to a baronet's daughter made this happy condition possible. Julia, daughter of Sir Abraham Elton, gave Hallam eleven children, a substantial private income, and a singleness of devotion that never wavered. No historian was ever more fortunate in his married life. A government sinecure, the commissionership of stamps, lent the finishing touch to his domestic happiness. The whole spirit of his work was conceived in an atmosphere of great tranquillity and security. It is not at all surprising to learn that Hallam dwelt for the greater part of his life in Wimpole Street. How easy it is to picture him there, with that fine massive head so strikingly revealed in the portrait by Phillips, poring with austere devotion over the sources of English constitutional history.

But Hallam was no mere recluse. No one ever ventured to dismiss him as the hermit of Wimpole Street. He made his mark in the best Whig society and was *persona grata* at Holland House and Bowood. As far as possible he avoided the company of Tories and High Churchmen, whom he always regarded as a potential danger to the sacred principles which informed his life's work. There are several vivid pictures in Lord Carlisle's journal of Hallam making merry with the pundits of Whiggery. At a breakfast-party in the June of 1843, at which Lord John Russell, Macaulay, and others were present, "Hallam read some wondrous extracts from the Lives of the Saints now being edited by Newman." The polite and cultivated appreciation with which the assembly would have greeted these marvels can have lost nothing from the grave and sober tones of the reader's voice. The party was a great success, for Lord Carlisle notes that "Never were such torrents of good talk as burst and sputtered from Macaulay and Hallam. A great deal about Latin and Greek inscriptions." At another breakfast party "Mahon tried to defend Clarendon, but was put down by Hallam and Macaulay." This sort of gathering frequently took place, the subjects ranging from Ancient Greece to current politics. In conversational brilliance Hallam was only eclipsed by Macaulay. Yet, unlike Macaulay, he never wished to play an active part in politics. As M. Mignet, who greatly admired Hallam, wrote, "il avait trop peu d'ambition pour aspirer à conduire les autres et trop d'indépendance pour consentir à être conduit." In spirit and temper he remained a Whig oligarch, a man of the eighteenth century. His learning was the mature fruit of long meditation on the past of England and Europe pursued in circumstances of the utmost calm. It is compact and rounded and polished; never hasty or hurried. There are no loose edges.

The intensive research of the last hundred years has fully demonstrated the great accuracy of Hallam's work. Though the authorities at his disposal were relatively limited in number (the national and local history societies were only just beginning their work of publishing original sources), he is hardly ever wrong on a question of fact. He is sometimes unbearably sententious, but he is never dull. He is able to command a broad sweep of history without faltering. Like Hooker, whom he greatly revered and in some ways resembled, he was eminently learned and judicious. He also knew how to produce the devastating phrase. Noy, the attorney-general of Charles I who thought of the writ of ship-money, is dismissed as a "man of venal diligence and prostituted learning." Of Queen Anne we are told that her "understanding and fitness for government were below mediocrity." Hallam's faults are glaringly obvious. His complacency knew no bounds. What are we to think of a man who seriously considered that the long-continued prosperity of his country was "the most beautiful phenomenon in the history of mankind"? His preoccupation with moral judgments is sometimes almost nauseating. He spends ten pages asking whether "a thoroughly upright and enlightened man" would have enlisted under the Royal or Parliamentary standard during the English Civil War, and finally decides that neither side deserves his support!

Macaulay, who was rarely over-indulgent to his contemporaries, made a great exception in the case of Hallam.

> His work is eminently judicial. Its whole spirit is that of the bench, not that of the bar. He sums up with a calm, steady impartiality, turning neither to the right nor to the left, glossing over nothing, exaggerating nothing, while the advocates on both sides are alternately biting their lips to have their conflicting mis-statements and sophisms exposed. On a general survey, we do not scruple to pronounce the *Constitutional History* the most impartial book that we ever read.

But impartiality is the last virtue—if virtue it really be in an historian—that we would claim for Hallam. He is a conservative Whig of the old school and, in ecclesiastical matters, a thoroughgoing Erastian. He is the true link between Blackstone, Burke, and the eighteenth-century panegyrists of the constitution and the critical school of Nineteenth-Century historians. The spirit of idolatry and the spirit of criticism jostle each other incongruously in his writings. He is usually calm, often judicial, but never wholly impartial. And I am inclined to think that his strong Whig bias is one of his greatest assets.

Hallam's reading of English history is conditioned by two central convictions or beliefs. The first is the belief that England has always had a mixed and limited monarchy. At certain times, notably under the Tudors and Stuarts, the country has swerved from this norm, only to be redirected by enlightened patriots into the paths of constitutional righteousness. Hallam's thoroughly upright and enlightened man held it as a "political postulate" that "the mixed government of England by King, Lords and Commons was to be maintained in preference to any other form of polity." The government of England has always been in part monarchical, in part aristocratic, in part democratic. The *regimen mixtum* of St. Thomas Aquinas is the mixed English constitution of Whig history. No wonder Lord Acton claimed, though half in jest, that St. Thomas was the first Whig! The Long Parliament of Charles I, in its first and "constitutional" phase, simply restored the government of England "to its former equipoise" under the Plantagenets. The revolution of 1688 gloriously confirmed the work of our medieval ancestors and supplied positive guarantees for the safeguarding of our liberties.

It is perfectly true that there is a superficial resemblance between the medieval government of England by king, nobles, and prelates, and the rule of the Whig oligarchy of the Eighteenth Century. In each case a ruling class had a firm grasp of the reins of power. But in neither instance is the democratical element in the "mixed" constitution anything more than a figment of the imagination, however satisfying it may seem to the demands of formal logic. And this fundamentally static view of history ignores those continuous changes in class-structure and methods of production which lie behind the constitutional development of the country. Economic history was still unborn when Hallam prostrated himself before that mixed constitution which he firmly believed to have existed, if not from all eternity, at least from the time of Magna Carta.

Hallam expresses his other fundamental conviction with his usual incisiveness and vigour. "The Whig had a natural tendency to political improvement, the Tory an aversion to it . . . the principle of the one, in short, was melioration; of the other, conservation." He is careful to explain that he is referring to the declared principles of the two parties and not to their actual practice, which so often degenerated into naked opportunism and senseless faction. Yet few would seriously deny that "the Whigs appear to have taken a far more comprehensive view of the nature and ends of civil society; their principle is more virtuous, more flexible to the variations of time and circumstance, more congenial to large and masculine intellects." The Whig oligarchy, with all its many shortcomings, immensely enlarged the sphere of civil, political, and religious liberty. In its maturity it produced Burke and Fox, Lord Grey and Lord John Russell. It presided at the birth of the middle-class government of the Victorian era.

Hallam would, I fear, have recoiled with horror at the modern age. His brand of Whiggery looked to the past rather than to the future. He grimly opposed the Great Reform Bill of 1832, fearing that revolution and anarchy lay just ahead. He never understood the vital movements of his times or the simplest aspirations of the mass of his fellow-countrymen. The explanation is that Hallam cared only for liberty. And by liberty he meant security for life and property and the fullest freedom of thought and expression. He detested republicanism and was profoundly suspicious of "levelling" egalitarian theories. He never understood the economic context of liberty, though he tacitly assumed that property carried with it certain political privileges. To privilege as such he had no sort of objection and he was very tender to all prescriptive rights.

When all has been said, it remains true that Hallam deserves a very high place among English historians. His strong bias in favour of Whig principles and civil and religious liberty can harm no one. His transparent honesty is as unmistakable as his naïve complacency. His learning is immense and his enthusiasm infectious. Why did he stop at 1760? He tells us that, in so doing, he was "influenced by unwillingness to excite the prejudices of modern politics." This is surely an act of quite unnatural restraint. For think of it! This arch-Whig, having laboriously traversed three centuries in three volumes, stops at the very eve of the American Revolution. George III and Lord North were not happy in their public lives. But in their death they escaped by a mere hair's breadth the avenging wrath of the father of Whig historians.

R. A. L. SMITH

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ANN VERONICA AGAIN

Ann Veronica. By H. G. WELLS. *Everyman Library. Dent.* 2s. 6d.

More instructive than the introduction to this new edition of *Ann Veronica* is a two-page list of Mr. Wells's writings. How much of the history of our time is contained in that list! It begins in 1893, with a text-book of biology in two volumes, and ends, almost fifty years later, with *Phoenix*, described by its still youthful author as "a revolutionary handbook." In between, like the reels of an endlessly vivid film, are packed novels, romances, prophecies, autobiographies, outlines, histories, pamphlets too numerous to be mentioned here. Obviously the best way of enjoying this irrepressible film-maker is to sit back and take him all in; and I note with dismay that of the whole show I have seen little more than a third. While others were busy keeping up with him, I fell behind. How are the lost sequences to be filled in?—for one can't, no really one can't, at my time of life, hope to recover Mr. Wells in bulk.

But a start can be made along definite lines. Personalities of the time: they could be hunted out, the Webbs in *The New Machiavelli*, Henry James in *Boon*, Wells himself in a number of books from *Clissold* to *The Experiment in Autobiography*. Or there are those typical new-comers whom Mr. Wells more than any other writer has helped to shape—the radiant scientific amateur, the middle-class agent for Utopia, the girl with a latch-key and a tongue of her own. Say, the last. Nora slammed the doll's-house door, Hedda shot her way out of provincialism, but these were early acts of violence, on which a curtain fell. Ann Veronica is both less dramatic and more afloat on her times. 1909 (note the date), toppers, suburbanism, Edwardian aestheticism and vulgarity, the motor car, the Fabian Society, votes for women: there must have been innumerable Ann Veronicas waiting for the encouragement given them by Mr. Wells. Papa might travel First, might lay down the law and rule out the new sort of friends as "loose" or "undesirable," but round the corner there would be always Widgetts, sprawling Bohemianly, to whom one tells the latest atrocity. With a fancy-dress party in the offing—

> "I've been," she said, "forbidden to come."
> "Hal-*lo*!" said Hetty, turning her head on the pillow, and Teddy remarked with profound emotion: "My God!"

The battle is on! And, of course—a strangled "My God!" finds its echo in our hearts—the reader is on the side of the rising generation. We always have been, especially when bowled over by a novel of Mr. Wells. Ann Veronica has her fling for freedom, wrestles with policemen outside the House of Commons, tries to set up on her own, limps home, makes a second and more successful flight with the help of a lover, who like herself has drawn inspiration from biology and sees new gates of existence opening. They are very "sensible" about living together until he can get a divorce, and Capes puts it ably (what Wells character wouldn't?) in one of those glowing off-hand speeches in which the novel abounds:

> "It's not a bit of good pretending there's any Higher Truth or wonderful principle in this business. There isn't. We never started out in any high-browed manner to scandalise and Shelleyfy. When first you left your home you had no idea that *I* was the hidden impulse. I wasn't. You came out like an ant for your nuptial flight. It was just a chance that we in particular hit against each other—nothing predestined about it. We just hit against each other, and here we are flying off at a tangent, a little surprised at what we are doing, all our principles abandoned, and tremendously and quite unreasonably proud of ourselves. Out of all this we have struck a sort of harmony . . . And it's gorgeous!"

Not quite so gorgeous, perhaps, as it must then have appeared; what was once dynamite is now, in retrospect, even a little tame. Ann Veronica and Capes speechifying on their mountain have joined a Tess lifted across the stream among the moments in fiction that have ceased to shock. But far-off though the excitement seems and optimistically sketched though the whole book is, it retains the merit—the immense merit—of being readable. Ann Veronica herself is alive enough to carry her case, the love affair is sympathetic, the enemy—parents, predatory lovers, and the world in general—provide brilliant caricatures. And everywhere, as this most infectious of novelists pours out his ideas, one hears the corks pop. The editors of *Everyman*, faced with the difficulty of deciding *which* novel, from the whole Wellsian saga, to begin with, have plumped for an early book that comes up smiling.

G. W. STONIER

THE VIRTUES OF EXAMINATION

The Case for Examinations. By J. L. BRERETON. *Cambridge University Press.* 8s. 6d.

What Mr. Brereton calls "the fashionable disapproval of examinations as a means of stimulating effort" is, I suppose, a by-product of the decline in the belief in original sin. Just as contemporary ethical theory starts with the presumption that human nature is naturally prone to goodness and that children have only to be allowed to "rip," according to their natural proclivities, to develop into saints, so a certain school of contemporary scholastic theory starts with the presumption that human nature is naturally prone to knowledge and that children have only to be allowed to operate freely according to their natural proclivities to develop into sages. And just as in the moral sphere the natural urge to virtue is supposed to be twisted by an evil environment embodied in nurses and parents, so in the intellectual sphere the natural urge to enlightenment is thwarted and discouraged by teachers and masters. These beliefs are illusory. They may be conceivably true in their application to what one wants to learn; unfortunately, however, there is precious little of any use that any child does want to learn, while in regard to what is naturally distasteful to the intellect they are ludicrously inappropriate. Nobody, for example, has ever wanted to learn the multiplication table for fun. Aristotle is surely nearer the truth when he remarks that all have the need but few the desire for education. Learning being repugnant to the young, the sooner the technique of it is mastered the better. Adult life is full of dull jobs. One "gets up" briefs, "mugs up" reports, reads memoranda, prepares invoices, copies minutes, listens to speeches, none of them things which anybody could possibly do "for fun," with the result that time and again I have heard young men and women brought up under the new educational dispensation complain that they were not taught in childhood the technique of mastering something that was inherently dull, or learning by heart something that nobody could possibly want to know. It makes things, they have said, so difficult for us now.

How, then, is the stimulus to effort to be applied? One answer—I think it is the best—is through competition. The desire to do better than the other boy is what keeps most young brains up to scratch. Take away the stimulus of competition and the intellectual effort necessary for the mastery of a subject is more than most of us can muster. (In parenthesis, with what melancholy regularity do the students who attend my lectures for what they call "interest," i.e. not for the purpose of preparing for a degree, fall away? I know almost to a lecture when I shall be too much for them. But they will never believe you when you tell them in advance that they will not stay the course.)

Now examinations are, in effect, a form of organised competition; hence it is as a stimulus to effort and an incentive to learning that Mr. Brereton chiefly defends examinations. By means of an ingenious simile, that of a boy learning to ride the bicycle who is offered sixpence by his father in the morning if he can ride in the evening to the end of the street, he brings out the conditions which a successful stimulus must satisfy. They are four: the reward for success must be sufficient; it must be offered over a limited time; there must be an assurance that the examination will be conducted fairly, and a conviction that it will be neither too hard nor too easy for those who are to take it.

Closely connected with the factor of stimulus is that of the mobilisation of effort and of its concentration upon a definite task. If there is no target the effort of the intellect is apt to degenerate into mere intellectual self-expression which, unless we are geniuses, is pleasant rather than valuable. What better target can there be than an examination, concrete, definite, and fixed, both in time and place?

Then there is the value of examinations as a method of classifying ability. Even this has been belittled partly on the ground that examiners are fallible, partly on the ground that intellectual ability is not classifiable or that it is not worth classifying. Mr. Brereton disposes convincingly of both objections. Examiners, of course, are fallible, but who or what is not? The great virtue of examinations is that they limit the fallibility inherent in the human to the intellectual sphere, precisely because the candidates are anonymous. Any other form of test—and this, of course, applies to oral tests—reports by masters, estimations of character and all the other devices which it is proposed to add to or substitute for examinations—is exposed to the fallibility not only of intellectual but of moral human nature. See the candidate, know him, hear him, and you are assailed by bias. This one is good-looking, that one has a bad accent; this makes every fibre of your being bristle with repulsion, to that you are instinctively drawn; and if, of course, you know your job it is easy to find perfectly good arguments for all your instinctive affinities and repulsions. As to the value of classifying mental ability, why should not we know which of us is clever and which stupid? It is even conceivable that the knowledge might help us to choose better leaders.

I have said enough to indicate what the case for examinations is, and, I hope, to establish the value of the book that makes it.

Beginning with a survey of the history of the present examinational system, Mr. Brereton indicates this and makes proposals for remedying it. For sixteen years assistant secretary of the Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, Mr. Brereton is, it is obvious, an extremely intelligent man and whatever he has to say on his own subject is well worth attending to. He is very level-headed: continually one is struck by his choice of the middle course. Thus, he criticises the romantics in education who hold that certain ideas are too elusive to be stated in words and are unwilling "to allow the teacher to know exactly what he is expected to teach or the student to know exactly what he is expected to become proficient in." But he is equally opposed to the quantitative value of education which would reduce it to a process for acquainting the masses with facts. He is opposed to the tendency to isolate the sciences, either from each other or from life; but he protests, equally, against the over-emphasis on the social effects of science. He has a number of admirable suggestions for the reform of syllabuses and for increasing the serviceableness both of syllabuses and examinations from the point of view of enabling examining bodies, teachers and universities to work more closely together.

Holding the views he does, he is naturally out of sympathy with the Norwood Report, to a criticism of whose recommendations he devotes a valuable last chapter. They are criticised because they involve a denial of the principle of equality of cultural opportunity, because they make a permanent separation between practical work and academic study and, above all, because in condemning the whole system of external and relying upon internal examinations, interviews and reports

they reopen the door to the abuses of favouritism, arbitrariness and patronage.

Whether or no you agree with Mr. Brereton's opinions, you cannot but respect them; they are the product of an able mind which has been for so long at work upon his subject that he is able to be at play with it. He has largely convinced at least one reader. C. E. M. JOAD

PANACEA OR PROGRAMME?

Make This The Last War. By MICHAEL STRAIGHT. *Allen and Unwin.* 10s. 6d.

Why are the spokesmen of the United Nations—numerically and territorially the greatest alliance in history—so curiously content to confine themselves to the platitudes of power and unity? Slogans that were all very well at the time of Dunkirk or Pearl Harbour now sound significantly like an evasion of easy promises made in the hour of danger. People want something more explicit to-day. The future that has been outlined in vague though glowing rhetoric seems to be only just the other side of the Second Front. The Common Man wants to know how to get his century.

Up till now, however, it has been left to the pamphleteers to tell him. And thousands of them have attempted to do the job. A glance at any bookseller's table will convince one of that. But how many of the plans and counter-plans really count? Very few. Is Mr. Straight's book one of them? Possibly, though it depends very much on what you have read already. An ardent member of the Left Book Club, or, for instance, anyone who reads *The New Republic*, would find nothing very novel in its essential argument. But for those who are still trying to discover what this war is all about, it is a pretty good summary from the standpoint of a Leftish intellectual.

Mr. Straight, it should be remembered, wrote his book for American readers at the end of 1942. He wanted to tell them how the anti-Fascist coalition came together; how America, for example, could fight as an ally of the U.S.S.R. without fearing that she was assisting the Bolshevising of Europe; how Fascism arose in Europe; and how we can make sure that this is really a popular and not imperialist war. To do so, he had to talk about a lot of things that are often taken for granted in this country; class struggles, imperialism, the break-down of European capitalism. But Main Street was hearing about them for the first time. So Michael Straight had to write like an evangelist, pouring out an amazing stream of facts, exhortations, emotional appeals and arguments. The whole book, in fact, reads like an extended speech, with all the tricks of style, reiteration and digression that one would expect from a journalist-orator.

But there is more to it than that. It is true that the United Nations represent the germ of a new world unity and nothing is more urgent than the discovery not only of the basis of future international co-operation but also of the way we can ensure that this really becomes a war of liberation, even if we cannot share Mr. Straight's optimism and think it the final war. In Mutual Aid and UNRRA, as well as in the pooling of technique and resources in the present emergency, we have the pattern, perhaps, of the new kind of political and economic arrangement which modern conditions demand. A serious examination of this is essential before we can advance any further in this direction. But Mr. Straight lets his enthusiasm lead on his argument too rapidly. There is a great deal more to do before anyone should start sketching out blueprints of world federation.

Throughout the whole book there is the same strange mixture of economic and political common sense and day-dreaming. It is easy to understand why this should be the case but it is not so easy to excuse it. Mr. Straight belongs to a generation which grew up in the grim aftermath of one war and the growing shadow of another. It had lost confidence in the politicians and had almost none in itself. Unless it could believe that this war was a crusade then it could see it only as a crime. This book is Mr. Straight's justification for the crusade. But all the same, a crusade collapses unless its aims are realistic.

Take, for instance, the book's fetching title. How can any attempt to secure a lasting peace succeed that does not pay careful attention to our settlement with Germany and the hundred and one problems that hinge upon it? Yet Mr. Straight devotes not more than half a dozen pages to a discussion of this subject. And the same could be said of a score of bther vital topics. While it is valuable to point out the strength of democracy and to show that its prospects are brighter than we sometimes feel, it is no service to underestimate one's enemy. That is the chief weakness of this interesting book. It makes the future seem too easily free. We need to be told our weaknesses and our opportunities. But the force of the criticism is diminished if it is itself a compromise between a panacea and a programme.

NORMAN MACKENZIE

THE DETACHED MIND

Letters to Malaya III and IV. By MARTYN SKINNER. *Putnam.* 5s.

This book will delight readers who prefer prying about amongst the intimacies of foothills, rather than attacking the peaks. The author writes with wit, coolness and detachment. At times the detachment becomes almost formidable, and one feels that the friendship pronounced by the author toward the *Alex* to whom the letters are addressed is a frigidly literary emotion, introducing this recipient merely to use him from time to time as a proxy second-voice to break the monotony of the soliloquy.

But not much more can be said adversely of so charming a set of verses. The author is not lacking in feeling as he looks out upon the civilisation (so exquisitely represented in himself) which he sees vanishing before the horrors of to-day and the aseptic surfaces of to-morrow. His occasional references to himself are worth quoting because they imply most of what the critic would wish to say about both him and his work. Martyn, "that laudator of old days," has an outlook reminiscent of Cowper and James Thomson (he of Richmond Hill) rather than of Pope. And in the matter of technique I think he owes also more to Thomson, whose warmth and fullness he reflects in general, though gems here and there glitter with all the brilliance lent by Pope's lapidary art.

The nice cultural balance and sanity of the poems are shown in the skilful way the contrast between Romantic and Realistic outlooks is handled between the two friends. First Martyn presents the nostalgic and romantic argument, to be jockeyed by Alex. Then the positions are swapped (are they really fancy-dress?). But with this, Martyn retains the more fixed spokesmanship on behalf of the days that are no more; the quiet, reflective way of life the distrust of over-emphasis.

O'er molehills an intrepid mountaineer
I have no head for heights or places sheer;
Nor are these letters suited to such climbs.
I'd rather talk of Thames's locks than Time's.

And he is not loth to do so, at some length, with descriptive couplets presenting various aspects of the English scene:

Describing how tall elms in tender green
Tuck the white farmhouse and 'mid raucous glee
Nests blacken in the leaf-tinged rookery—
Vignettes like such are more within my scope
Than your huge canvas of despair and hope.

It is the more pitiful, therefore, that the outrageous occasions of our war-torn world force

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him to sing louder, and to attempt some definition of the terror and vileness of things as we know them to-day.

But when I came to probe the haunt of fear ;
To eye the foul inflictions, and to hear ;
To see ill-treatment made a fixed routine ;
Brutality, a daily rite obscene,
The flogging-block its altar ; to behold
Men innocent, respected, gifted, old,
Whipped, drudged to death, or made the helpless toys
Of criminals and trained, sadistic boys :
And all as part of a consistent plan
To subjugate a nation to a man :
Why then, my friend, I found I lacked the skill
To speak my thoughts, and be coherent still.
For as with grief or fear or angry curse
The voice may choke or quaver, so the verse.

But Mr. Skinner's verse never chokes or quavers, even when he writes of the world-wide conflagration in which

History's pages crackle as they turn,

for he has a deep keel of emotional control, based in reading that is as substantial to him as the actualities of the world around him. His scholarship is displayed, but with taste and wisdom; and this makes me suspect that perhaps I should have compared him with Thomas Gray rather than with the more untidy Thomson.

RICHARD CHURCH

ACTION STORY

Road to Tunis. By A. D. DIVINE. *Collins.* 10s.

Road to Tunis is an account of men meeting war for the first time, and deals mainly with Americans. Mr. Divine landed in North Africa with the first waves of the assault forces to live and record the campaigning of the 701st Tank Destroyer Army. As in the first engagements of the U.S. Navy, there were costly errors through inexperience. There was the stunning, horrible moment when C Company was machine-gunned by planes from a height of 50 feet, when their defensive fire ceased, as they understood that they were being shot up by the U.S. Army Air Corps. To retaliate would have doubled the tragedy; they died, and in a few seconds of bitter error C Company had almost ceased to exist. Tired and disillusioned men reassembled their broken forces, and as they worked "C Company . . . was born—not born anew, but born for the first time. What had been an agglomeration of men before the mistake of Medjez Pass was a single body after."

The writer not only sees more than the average correspondent, he understands more and uses better English The picture of a large French family, some killed, some wounded, by a enemy-seeking machine-gun fired with blind curiosity into the blackness of their hiding place is tragic. Their almost silent grief is unforgettable. But there are lyrical moments, too, such as when the entire convoy, living up to Siegfried Sassoon, burst into song while descending a steep mountain highway. The song spread from end to end of the miles-long column of vehicles, which increased speed happily until it rolled with beautiful frenzy to the flatness of the plains. A little moment in the campaign, but the author gives us a chance to share the great value such moments have for troops engaged in battle.

Mr. Divine is no slave to his diary, and presents a convincing outline of the African campaign in its entirety. *Road to Tunis* narrows down and isolates us from the whole action only on those occasions when C Company is itself isolated. Even then the author bridges the gaps successfully without writing a news summary. It is a very convincing picture of modern, fluid warfare and also of the successful welding of Navy, Army and Air Force into a single striking force.

The North African campaign is over. Little more can be said or written about these spheres of action until the war itself is over and official records are accessible, and even then *Road to Tunis*, although never to be compared to such works as *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, will retain some value.

CHARLES LANDERY

Week-end Competitions

No. 736

Set by G. W. Stonier

In last week's *Times Literary Supplement* there appeared the following advertisement :

Quoth Andrew Mac (frae North o' Tweed) :
Nae doot, like me, you like to read
The latest books, and yet forbye
Save sille too ? Then you must aye
Buy only what is *worth* your cash,
And leave to ither folk the trash !
Och aye, you say—but how to choose ?
Well, read *John Betjeman's* reviews !
A simple tip, yet you will be
Well-read *and* thrifty, mon—like me !
For lively Book-Reviews
John Betjeman
in the
DAILY HERALD

Competitors are asked to supply advertisements, in prose or verse, for other well-known critics of literature and the arts, in whatever style seems most suitable. Entries must be received not later than March 20th.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 73

Set by Raymond Mortimer

Competitors are invited to write 14 lines about hats, flowers or musical instruments with triple rhymes like those in Hood's *Nocturnal Sketch*. Here are the first 5 lines of the model :

Even is come ; and from the dark Park, hark,
The signal of the setting sun—one gun !
And six is sounding from the chime, prime time
To go and see the Drury-Lane Dane slain,—
Or hear Othello's jealous doubt spout out.

Report by Raymond Mortimer

I feared I had asked the almost impossible, and that entries would be very few. There were over 150, all of them ingenious. One hero, S. Pear, contrived a sonnet which I regretfully disqualified because, like several others, he in one line used the same rhyme twice (" blue to blue "). Such judicial severity was possible and necessary, because of the general high standard I dismissed Allan M. Laing for rhyming *real* with *zeal* —and if he complains of my allowing *dawn* and *morn* I shall maintain that in modern standard English this rhyme is perfect. I should like to suggest to several competitors that the arum is the least harum-scarum of flowers, but I have not made this rhyme an absolute disqualification. Entries I should like to print came from R. J. M. Grant, A. B., Ronald Mason, E. Headridge, C. E. B., L. E. Leaper, J. H. Moffat, H. M. Baker, L. V. Upward, B. P. Leatham, Roger Senhouse, Lena Ramsden, I. F. Parry, Keith Spalding, S. B., Frank Spooner, E. W. F., Colin Wills, A. F. W. I. C. Saul, G. B. C. L., Trim, Constance Sewell, K. M. S., Nancy Gunter and E. S. Still I am left with ten, of which four are outstanding. F. C. C., R. J. H. Hewison, Little Billee and E. Stanway—to each of which goes a prize of 15s. Consolation prizes of 5s. to K. M. S., William Bliss, J. A. J., Avon and E. M. I notice that other judges usually don't give the first prize to the best entry, and doubtless I resemble them in this. But I think nobody this week can grudge the winners their luck.

MOUNTAIN FLOWERS.

Enough of iron winter. Oh, go snow
And weight of death on everything ! Spring ! bring
Your April when the sound of rills fills hills
And vales with rushing joy. Away gray day !
Come with a risen life begun, Sun !—done
The flowerless bare hours of chill ill-will.

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Company Meeting.

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

RECORD TRAFFICS

THE annual general meeting of the Great Western Railway Company was held on March 8th in London.

Sir Edward Cadogan (the deputy-chairman), in the course of his speech, said : With the balance of £275,077 brought forward from last year, the amount available for dividend on the Consolidated Ordinary stock is £2,225,291. We are able, therefore, to recommend a dividend of 2½ per cent. for the half-year ended 31st December last, making 4½ per cent. for the whole year, with a carry-forward of £293,453. The dividend is the same as for the previous year, when the carry-forward was £18,376 lower.

Our arrears in complete renewals of the permanent way are at present equivalent to the total amount of renewal work we would normally carry out in a period of about 15 months. Our arrears in locomotive renewals represent a normal two years' building programme, and in passenger train vehicles a normal three years' programme. The position in regard to other maintenance work is somewhat similar. It is, I think, an eloquent testimony to our past efficiency and our recognition of future needs that the standard of maintenance which we adopted in pre-war years—several of them none too prosperous—was of such an order that we have been able to allow arrears of maintenance to accumulate so considerably without serious detriment to our operations, notwithstanding that throughout the war period the volume of traffic conveyed annually over the company's system has been far in excess of that carried in any pre-war year.

The achievements of the railways during the present national emergency are appropriately summed up in the Prime Minister's Message on the occasion of the twenty-first anniversary of the grouping in December last when he expressed the nation's thanks for the highly efficient manner in which they had met every demand made upon them during the four years of desperate struggle with Nazi Germany. During the past year the volume of passenger and merchandise traffic carried by the Great Western Railway exceeded all previous records. I cannot speak too highly of the services which all grades of the staff continue to render in support of the war effort.

Owing to the radical change in the military outlook, our thoughts have naturally centred on the post-war position of the railways and especially on the part which we shall be expected to play in connection with the solution of the problems that will confront us immediately upon the cessation of hostilities.

We fully recognise that when hostilities are concluded we shall have to plan and build anew, but if the objective is to secure the most efficient and economical use of all forms of transport with due regard to the requirements of industry and of the community in general, we support the conclusions reached by the Transport Advisory Council that the best line of approach to achieve this end is to secure for traffic adequate alternative facilities with competition on fair terms. The problems we have to face cannot be solved by changes such as those advocated in some quarters for political reasons without regard to practical realities. In our view the advantages derivable from the present ownership and management of the main line railways as four separate statutory entities have proved to be far more beneficial than those likely to be derived under any form of public or quasi-public ownership.

The report was adopted.

I recollect an Easter dawn. Morn born
Crystal to make the spirit fly sky-high ;
And how I then a secret wild child, smiled
To slip unshepherded outside, wide-eyed,
And on the fresh unevened ground round found
Anemones that in the new dew grew,
And blue hepaticas there were, there, fair
Fair past the heart's belief, in bright white light.
F. C. C.

In Persian gardens, where the rose grows, blows
And falls all in an ardent day, they say
Love's like a rose ; for, grown in sand and fanned
By hot simoon, by too strong sun undone,
Their love soon withers. Here in the showers ours flowers
More durable : our violet yet wet
With rain, our wind-blown daffodil, will still
Though spring should breathe intempestive, live, give
Place but to a fairer—if more fair there were.
Ev'n when, for the year's funeral pall, fall
Sad leaves, and trees, stern friars, in brown gown frown,
Will splendour of chrysanthemum come—some
Purple, some on his dying bed shed red :
All in their petals manifold hold gold.
R. J. P. HEWISON

BOYS' ORCHESTRA

It isn't often one enjoys boys' noise,
But here begins a fearful cheerful earfull !
Young oboe hobo ! Right away ! Play " A " !
Carry on ! let the clarionet get set !
Piccolo, tickle oh ! Follow suit, flute—toot !
Hark how the bold bassoon gossoon has soon
Begun to put his joking croaking spoke in !
And listen how that middle kid'll fiddle,
Milking the music from his tingling string !
Young 'cello fellow, bellow a humdrum strum !
Now give that juvenile double-bass ace place !
Thump, drums ! And brass, let loose a Grade A bray !
Tap-tap ! One, two ! They're going ! bowing ! blowing !
Through to the final long chord concord—encored !
" LITTLE BILLEE "

DANCE BAND

Hi-de-hi ! from the bandstand and
Ho-de-ho ! from the fans. Neat feet beat
Out the rhythm . . . the crumba, tumba, rumba,
Of the drums. Everybody dances, prances, glances
At the leader ! (What a boy !) Watch his slick stick flick !
Hear him murmur in the microphone ! Groan ! Moan !
Saxophone and 'cello ! Say ! Can that cute flute toot !
Hot up them fiddles ! Boy ! Let 'em swing, sing ! Bring
Out the twiddles ! Hi ! Is that bum drum dumb ?
Now where's that trumpet ! Shout out ! Rout
Out them blues ! Sure, this'll make 'em, shake 'em, break 'em !
Oh boy ! Watch this top-line band ! It just, must, bust
Every ear-drum ! Ses you ! And how ! ! Now ! ! WOW ! ! !
Toodle-oodle-oodle . . . E. STANWAY

SYMPHONIC POEM*

No whisper yet floats from the mute flute. Lute
Is voiceless. Dimly from the dumb drum come
Rumours of sound, a muffled beat. Fleet, sweet,
The oboe answers. Now in the light bright flight
The mounting violins take the wing, sing, spring,
And singing, springing, scale the skies. Cries rise
From brass and wood : a murmuring throat-note ; float
Of flute-song soaring to a rare fair air.
In woven arabesques below, slow flow
Of harp ; the golden swell o' mellow 'cello.
Then at the clarionet's clear call all fall
Suddenly silent. A trumpet wakes, shakes, breaks
The stillness ; shattered echoes drift, lift, shift,
And fade. Strings, brass and wood-wind keep deep sleep.
K. M. S.

FLOWERS IN SEASON

In Spring, the wood-anemone see free
Her petals white ; and Celandine shine fine ;
And Primrose rathe and Daffodil thrill, spill
Largesse abroad ; and everything sing, " Spring ! "

In Summer, ev'ry garden-close glows Rose,
And Lilies dazzle sight with bright white light,
And musk Carnations scent the air there where
The honey-laden Linden trees please bees.

In Autumn, Sunflowers lift up their fair hair
Golden against the lessening sun, undone ;
And brave Chrysanthemums unfold old gold,
And leaves, once green, now have instead bled red.

In Winter, through bare trees winds blow snow low
Where late their leafy colonnade made shade.
WILLIAM BLISS

This is only a short fragment from a

SCENE IN A MILLINER'S SHOP.

The assistant's words are spoken aloud, but the customer's lines are her unspoken thoughts, while the hat in question is being tried on.

Assistant : Perhaps you'll try this cart-wheel style, while I'll
« Get Others.
Customer : Cartwheels now, and flat at that.
The Saint Who Wore Her Halo Wrong. Hongkong
Housewife seen lunching out in Soho. NO.
Ass. : I've brought some models here for you to view.
This small one's sweet, now March is bringing Spring.
Cus. : Bouquet inside a lover's knot—what rot.
Not suitable for March winds, nor for War.
Ass. : This jaunty " sailor " you should try.
Cus. : My eye,
Blacked out, provides the Nelson Touch. Much Dutch Courage needed for this also. Nogo.
If you're not very careful, J. A. J.,
Unless some others much more humdrum come
You'll buy one like a large maroon prune soon.
J. A. J.

The toff buys from a classy shop a proper topper
May be the choice of Gilbey will be trilby ;
But you and I prefer perhaps chaps' caps,
Or in the Summer go in more for straw.

A general's lid must to the brass class pass,
And College Fellows oughter sport a mortar.

While François likes a very merry beret,
And Egypt's fashion nowadays says fez,
The American who gets on bets on Stetson.
Twins Siamese without palaver halve a balaclava.

The Scots heid has an honest bonnet on it
And scorns the Anglo-Saxon vile style tile.

Contriving triple rhymes is rough, tough stuff ;
I've had enough, so drat that hat—that's flat.
AVON

FLOWERS

How sweet to wander, in a boon June noon,
Where the brown bees play rover over clover,
Or with their busy wings the lush rush brush,
Or tumble in the asphodel, pell-mell,
And nectar from the lily's cup sup up,
Till on the hive's smooth plank they light, quite tight !
Next let me, where the garden rose blows, doze,
While heady scents my eyes in deep sleep steep ;
Then wake to admire the far from humdrum 'mum,*
And gaze upon some harum-scarum arum,
Or meconopsis of the true blue hue,
Or flaring salvias like a red bed-spread,
Whose gaudy tints the floppy poppy copy—
Who would to such a well-spent day say nay ?
E. M.

*Gardener's short for Chrysanthemum.

Personal

GENTLEMAN (22), good education, student Paris till war, suffering chest disease suit war disablement, requires long rest. Would immensely appreciate offer of good home in country. Box 4405.

WOULD someone lend furniture to careful user, in pref. to storing it ? Box 4148.

WANTED rent/purchase cottage country, not too isolated. Box 4149.

OFFICER'S wife (with baby) would rent furnished or unfurnished house/cottage in North Staffs or would share expenses in country house. Box 4303.

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Personal—continued

DISCUSSION Groups. The D.G. Bureau (Questions, " Quiz ") can help your group. Full details from Secretary, Box 4263.

WOMAN artist seeks another painter share studio. Vacant three days weekly. Write 57 Chesil Court, S.W.3. Flaxman 4337.

LADY with two boys wishes share house (preferably unfurnished) with mother and child/children. Reasonable access London. Suggestions welcomed. Box 4222.

MOTHER looking after two families, three boys, two girls, ages 5–13, requires help Easter holidays. Student any nationality welcomed. Free days and remuneration by arrangement. Resident cook. Keyser, The Grange, Shiplake, Oxon.

WILL anyone sell, reasonable price, really good a.c. radiogram or E.M.G. to 2 poor married members H.M. Forces ? Box 4150.

CARAVAN (converted bus) overlooking Vale of Evesham. Main water. Elsan. Sleep 4. To let, £1 p.w. Box 4151.

SOME primary Montessori material, kindergarten chairs and tables for sale. Crocombe, Willowdene, Ashley Park Rd., Walton-on-Th.

MOD. Churchmen's Union, Pres. : Sir Cyril Norwood (Hon. Sec., Steeple Claydon, Bletchley) welc. those who " follow the argument wherever it leads." " Modern Churchman " quarterly, other lit. and confs.

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READABLE modern books wanted. Particularly Book Club eds., Shaw Omnibus, Children's Encyc., etc., etc. J. Clarke Hall Ltd., Wine Office Ct., E.C.4. CEN. 4116.

OUR fighting men in times of adversity, after Service, may count on the help of the British Legion. A legacy to Haig's Fund, Cardigan House, Richmond, Surrey, will benefit *all* ranks of *all* services ; their families, too.

BERNARD Shaw Tries to Smash Socialist Arguments! Slashing Reply! See " The Western Socialist " (U.S.A.). Also other realistic articles. Send 3d. stamps to-day, Soc. Party of G.B., 2 Rugby St., London, W.C.1.

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DECORATED bed-sit.-rm. Ladies' home. Use kit. Highgate. Suit bus. woman. MOUntview 9331.

GUEST House, Hampstead, best part, 4 mins. Tube, has some vacancies. From 4 gns., breakfast and dinner. Write 8 Arkwright Rd., N.W.3. HAM. 4922.

UNFURN. Rms. (2–3) in rural central-heated house, Sevenoaks, offered by scientist and artist wife to quiet, intelligent people. Use of kit. (separate cooker), bathroom. Share domestic gardener. £90. Box 4228.

LADY offers furnished bed-sitting room, without attendance, reasonable terms, return part-time help in vegetable garden, country, Oxon. Box 4249.

YOUNG naval wife wishes share large, light Chelsea flat. Babies not barred. Box 4266.

N. WALES. Scientist, thirtyish, cultured, requires comfortable quarters with part board, Bangor-Caernarvon neighbourhood. Please make suggestions. Box 4279.

GENTLEMAN, foreign, furniture for 3 persons, wants share flat sm. house. Richmond or suburb (northern, up to 20 miles). Household help given. Box 4247.

C.O. (landworker) and wife urgently require accom. within 10 miles Crawley. Box 4224.

SOLDIER'S wife, History B.A., baby end April, seeks pleasant accom. in country middle May, pref. where local opp. for future part-time work. Qualified teacher, trained farm and sec. work. Box 4219.

FARM or similar board-accommodation wanted, quiet inland area for parents and 2 children (school-age), 2 bedrooms, 1 sitting, 3–4 weeks Aug.–early Sept. Offers ? Box 4207.

WOMAN Doctor requires 1 or 2 rooms, furn. or unfurn., C.H.W., cooking and bathing facilities, tel., central situation, near tube, lower floor. Alternatively, half board. Box 4181.

HOME sought with regular reader of this journal by M.A. married woman, born America, needing change and quietness. Unable to afford more than £3 p.w. on board. Box 4211.

Accommodation—continued

PROFESSIONAL man would like occasional week-end accommodation country, near golf-links preferably. Box 4173.

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OLD-FASH'D Cotswold cottage in own gdn., to let. 3 bedrms., living rm., ktchn., scly., h. & c., bath, w.c., range, elec. stove, Ideal boiler, tel. Bus and post at door. Rly. 2½ m., London, So. Box 4389.

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WANTED to rent, unfurnished cottage or half farmhouse, min. 3 bedrooms, within reach of Edgbaston. Ludford-Brooks, 39 Middleway, Hampstead, N.W.11.

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